

**Remembering the Forgotten  
Archaeology at the Morrissey  
WWI Internment Camp**

by

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B.A., University of the Fraser Valley, 2011

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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## **Abstract**

To date, there is very little known archaeologically about First World War era Internment Camps, especially in Canada where many of the Federal Internment records were destroyed in the 1950s. Archaeologists can play a fundamental role in contributing knowledge where there remains a lack of oral and documentary evidence through a triangulation of data sets commonly used by historical archaeologists. This thesis focuses on one of Canada's twenty-four WWI internment camps – Morrissey Internment Camp, and specifically its cemetery. Through an archaeological landscape analysis, GPR survey of the cemetery, archives retrieval and oral history interviews, the story of the Morrissey Internment Camp was brought to light and gaps in the historical record finally answered.

**Keywords:** Internment archaeology; Confinement; GPR; Morrissey; PoWs; WWI; Austro-Hungarian; German

*To my children Kamran and Sophia who will inherit this world,  
and make it a much better place.*

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## List of Acronyms

B.C.	British Columbia
CFWWIRF	Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund
CNP	Crows Nest Pass Coal Company
FIPPA	Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
GPR	Ground Penetrating Radar
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
PoW	Prisoner of War
RNWMP	Royal North-West Mounted Police
SFU	Simon Fraser University
TB	Tuberculosis
YCJA	Youth Criminal Justice Act

# Chapter 1.

## Introduction

When I asked my mom where she was born, she replied, “I was born in a little village just outside of Montreal”. So of course, being a nice guy of Kincaid, I could see this nice little village. There was snow on the roof, there were yellow windows and smoke coming out the chimney and then I find out that she was born in a concentration camp, in a tar paper shack, in the middle of nowhere. (Ukrainian-Canadian man, interview, July 7, 2014)

To date, there is very little known archaeologically about First World War Internment Camps (Myers 2011); a salvage archaeological report from Quedlinburg, Germany (Demuth 2009), a Parks Canada report from Mt. Revelstoke Internment Camp, B.C. (Francis 2009) and an archaeological report from the Spirit Lake Internment Camp, Quebec (Roy 2000) are all that have been published to offer insight into WWI confinement operations. This limited research highlights the gap in our awareness of WWI internment sites. The knowledge and skills developed from research at WWII sites is a template for WWI internment research, providing critical information regarding the origins of contemporary internment camps (Myers 2011).

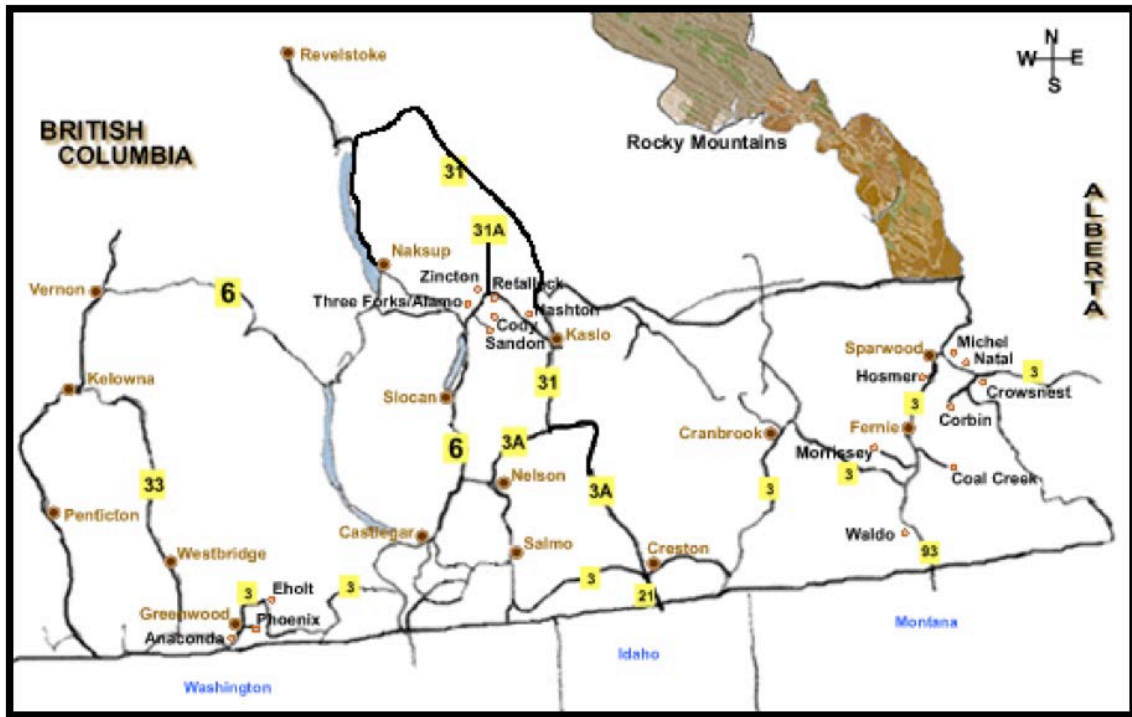
Why is it important? Often, history becomes rewritten through the lens of the current political climate and consequently both the history and commemoration process can then be challenged. In addition, many cultures deal with trauma in different ways – some choose to speak about their experiences while others prefer to bury them and never speak about the traumatic events again (Moshenska 2009). Many of the prisoners confined in the Canadian Internment camps refused to speak about their internment history out of embarrassment, humiliation and fear that they may be wrongfully imprisoned again (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 2001). This silencing that occurs on behalf of the prisoners combined with the rewriting of history on behalf of stakeholder communities creates a deadly platform that allows those in positions of power to continue such illicit

behavior. The War Measures Act that was enacted during WWI, WWII and again in 1970, can be applied to any Canadian citizen at any moment the government deems necessary, immediately stripping one's basic right to freedom. "First they arrested the Ukrainians, then they did the same with the Japanese and now we have Guantanamo Bay" (Ukrainian-Canadian woman, interview, July 5, 2014).

This erasure and subsequent denial contributes to the shifting of public perceptions of internment history, which promotes an alternative narrative written through the lens of the current political climate (Medin 2007; Myers & Moshenska 2011). Although historians are limited to these politically charged and often incomplete archival records and oral histories, archaeologists are trained to elicit history from material culture that contributes a third line of evidence to bolster reconstructions of internment history at a given location (Demuth 2009; Early 2013; Thomas 2011). While also subject to formation processes (e.g., erosion, decay), the archaeological record provides insights not available in the historical record (Carr 2011; Casella 2007; Medin 2007; Myers & Moshenska 2011, 2013; Mytum 2011). By filling in these empty spaces, archaeologists provide a remedy for the sinister objective of erasing and re-writing history (Casella 2007; Medin 2007; Myers & Moshenska 2011).

Morrissey Internment Camp was situated in the abandoned coal-mining town of Morrissey between Cranbrook and Fernie in the Elk Valley of southeastern British Columbia. It opened on September 28, 1915 and closed on October 21, 1918.





**Figure 1.1. Map of Southeastern British Columbia**

Note: retrieved from Ghost Towns of British Columbia  
<http://www.ghosttownpix.com/bc/maps.html>, reproduced with permission

The Canadian government initially labeled Morrissey a concentration camp, however, following the aftermath of the WWII German concentration camps, Canada designated such locations “internment camps” to avoid the association with the German death camps (Luciuk 2006). Although there has been more press coverage in recent years, many Canadians remain unaware of this internment history, and the local few who are cognizant of it often refer to the locations as having housed destitute foreigners during WWI.

Several factors have contributed to this shift in public perception, the most significant having occurred in 1954. Due to privacy issues and lack of space, the Canadian government destroyed its Custodian of Enemy Alien Property files as well as personnel files pertaining to the Canadian internment camp operations after WWII (Kordan 2002; Laycock 1994; Luciuk 2006; Norton 1998). With the advantage of retrospection, the destruction of these records was a deliberate act in an effort to mitigate the fall out from the internment operations. Surviving information originates from

Department of Defense Mobilization files, records of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Department of the Secretary of State, the William Doskoch Fonds, Prime Minister Robert Borden's diaries, the head of internment operations General Sir William Dillon Otter's diaries, and records of the few internees and guards who spoke about the ordeal after the camps' closures. Many of the internees were ashamed of their internment history and refused to speak about it with family members once they were released. Consequently, it is only possible to make general statements about internment camp operations as a whole and about some particulars of specific camps, in cases where internees and guards provided information. Information about the individuals—nationality, age, cause of arrest, funds seized, and monies earned—is no longer available (Bodhan Kordan, personal communication, September 24, 2014). An archaeological investigation of the Morrissey Internment Camp will therefore contribute knowledge to Canadian internment history that can then be applied to other internment camps across Canada.

I am interested in investigating the evolution of public perceptions of the Morrissey Internment Camp over the past century. Four objectives need to be achieved in order to learn why Morrissey Internment Camp has been almost completely erased from the historical record and to comprehend why members of the local community feel that Morrissey never hosted an internment camp – in the true sense of confinement. To explore this, I will combine three lines of evidence: material culture; archival reports; and interviews with members of the local community, descendants of the internees, and guards of the Morrissey Internment Camp and Cemetery. To accomplish this goal, the following four objectives were fulfilled:

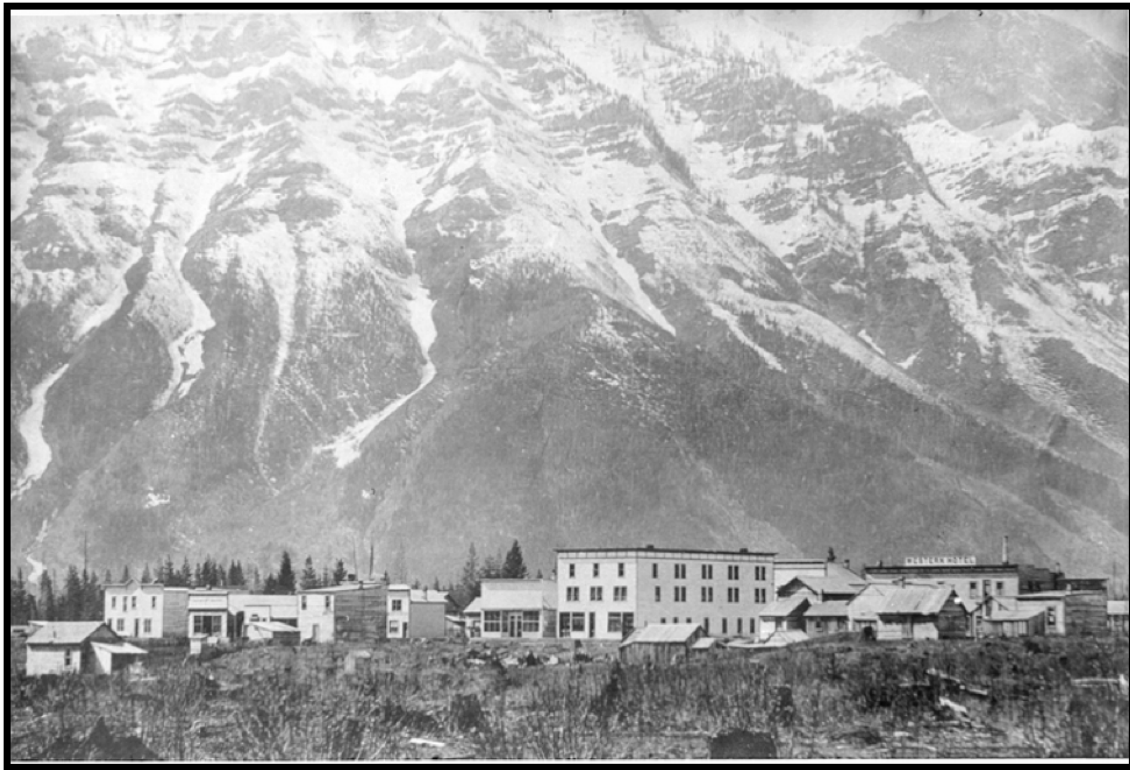
- Determine which ethnicities were interned at the camp
- Determine how ethnic affiliation affected daily activities
- Investigate the varying relationships between ethnic internees and guards, community members, and government representatives
- Document how perceptions of the camp have changed over the past century

The objectives were met by using a ground penetrating radar and metal detector to determine the number of graves, by conducting a landscape analysis of the

internment camp and cemetery, by interviewing the local community and descendants of the internees and guards, and by gathering archival data.

## **1.1. Thesis Outline**

The following chapter will provide the reader with a greater understanding of the relatively new field of the archaeology of institutions. Chapter 3 will offer the background history of the Austro-Hungarian and German immigrants, events leading up to the Great War and contributing to the creation of the Canadian Internment Operations and the Morrissey Internment Camp specifically. A discussion of the methods used and the subsequent results of the Ground Penetrating Radar survey, archaeological landscape analysis as well as the archival and interview data results will follow. Lastly, an in depth discussion pertaining to the results and what it all means once the material culture record, archival reports and oral histories are combined and analyzed as well as directions for future work at this site will be examined.



**Figure 1.2. The coal-mining town of Morrissey 1902-1904 prior to the internment camp (0987, Fernie Historical Society, reproduced with permission)**

Note: Fernie Historical Society, 0987, reproduced with permission

## **Chapter 2.**

# **The Archaeology of Confinement**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Confinement is a relatively new subject for historical archaeology. However, its imprint greatly increased with twentieth century warfare and the treatment of civilians in prison camps, concentration camps, internment camps and then in refugee camps. In each case concentrating people in these camps left an imprint in the landscape and in history (Casella 2007; Myers & Moshenska 2011). Although their material presence may be short-lived, as they can be swiftly dismantled and removed from the physical landscape, internment persists in memory when oral histories are shared across generations. Finally, depriving civil liberties from certain citizens is contentious for stakeholder communities. They may try to erase the traces of internment from the social landscape in order to rewrite the history of that particular time period. Hence, new information garnered through the practice of archaeology gives us another means to explore the subject (Seitsonen & Herva 2011).

Confinement is the topic I interrogate in this chapter. I provide examples of key issues examined within the context of the material culture record at different sites. In addition, I focus on the burdens placed on the survivors of the traumatic histories. A key element for archaeologists of confinement is to incorporate that lived experience when possible, or to engage descendants in the archaeological narrative. The intent is not to disturb the emotional well being of the survivor, so “Do No Harm!” must be first and foremost on the mind of the researcher (Moshenska 2008). Community archaeology projects can be cathartic for the survivors because commemorating that heritage can shed new light on a difficult time and introduce therapeutic options that assuage the negative memories associated with that place.

## **2.2. Archaeology of Confinement**

Confinement alludes to three broad categories: punishment, asylum and exile (Casella 2007). Imprisonment for criminals has changed little over the centuries, but concepts of punishment did lead to moral reform based on the potential of rehabilitation. Asylums confine those in need of social welfare, and include institutional environments such as halfway houses, mental asylums, quarantine and hospitals. Lastly, confinement as exile is a form of political control wherein banishment is the antidote for those considered politically, racially or ethnically disenfranchised (Banks 2011; Casella 2007). For archaeologists, some of the key issues examined within the context of material culture are: control, surveillance, domination, resistance, cooperation, prison economies, gender, sexuality and stakeholder communities (Myers & Moshenska 2011).

Confinement serves to control prisoners and its material expression is notable within the boundaries of prison walls and barbed wire fences. Natural barriers, for example lakes, rivers and islands, can define its perimeter, such as the infamous prison called Alcatraz. Geographical provinces, such as deserts and wilderness, feature distances that make survival outside of institutional confinement impossible thus preserving the detention (Myers & Moshenska 2013: 2).

Surveillance survives in the archaeological record because watchtowers and spy holes leave a footprint, though the CCTV or electronic monitoring systems of our time create new challenges. Nevertheless, repetition in the architectural design of institutional spaces contributes to optimal observation by creating symmetrical lines of sight and eliminating visual distractions that enhance camouflage (Myers & Moshenska 2013). Portable material culture too is deployed to encourage conformity. Identical dishes and drab, unfashionable clothing imposes mind control through social conformity that eliminates the individual (Myers & Moshenska 2013). For example, several escape attempts from Fort Hood, Texas, a WWII German PoW internment camp, inspired design measures to discourage anyone from fleeing. Five hundred feet of unobstructed space was created outside of the perimeter line in order to eliminate any chance of variability in the environment. In addition, barracks were built up on blocks to discourage tunneling (Thomas 2011).

Resistance too leaves its traces in the archaeological record because rule-breaking in the form of contraband goods, vandalism or escape elicits responses such as solitary confinement cells. Repercussions for acts of sedition yielded solitary confinement cells while contraband goods, such as non-uniform clothing, food, drugs and alcohol, exemplify further signs of defiance. Fugitives concocted their physical escape through tunneling, however, prisoners gained mental escape through arts and crafts to pass the time. Drugs and alcohol brought fleeting psychological relief, but only suicide brought a final escape. Vandalism, another form of resistance, appears in the material record because attempts to destroy or attack confinement site requires it (Myers & Moshenska 2013).

Wall art and graffiti create a layer of protection for the artist, who paints or carves an ideology and identity onto an institutional space that challenges, threatens or frightens the dominating force (Casella 2007; Myers & Moshenska 2013). Artwork and crafts are another form of cultural resistance used to boost the morale of prisoners and often remain undetected by guards (Myers & Moshenska 2011; 2013). German PoWs incarcerated on the Isle of Man during WWII created cattle bone vases with subversive escapist fantasies etched onto them (Mytum 2011).

The V for Victory campaign launched by the European BBC was another attempt to boost morale for occupied peoples in Europe during WWII. Painting or chalking a V on the walls of buildings was meant to symbolize an Allied victory and instilled apprehension among the Germans. The British Channel Islanders, civilians imprisoned in German concentration camps, hid V signs throughout their internment site. Men even shaved their mustaches into V shapes to boost moral and to create a bond of solidarity amongst the detainees (Carr 2011).

Prison economies depend on the trafficking and exchange of licit and illicit items that flow through the permeable barriers of the detention centre. Implicit in this market are questions about strict duality of domination and resistance, when cooperation among guards and prisoners becomes necessary in order for the goods to travel back and forth (Myers & Moshenska 2011; 2013). Allied prisoners in Europe had access to Red Cross care packages containing items unobtainable during Nazi WWII rationing, allowing them

to trade with the Germans for a desired item (Myers & Moshenska 2013). In Auschwitz, internees were not provided with utensils, so they learned very quickly to acquire a spoon and a bowl for survival. Their diet consisted of soup, which required a bowl for dignity and the means to eat. A spoon was necessary as the alternative was to 'lap it up like a dog'. Hence, the lachrymose trade in these critical domestic items usually taken for granted (Myers 2011).

Internment as exile, often confines military aged males or the families of men involved in rebellious acts (Myers & Moshenska 2013). In mixed-gender confinement camps, women sometimes are held in more comfortable, secure and private quarters than their male counterparts. However, in cases where both sexes are mistreated equally, the internment camp often has the purpose of extermination or genocide (Myers & Moshenska 2011; Myers 2011).

Institutional attempts to control sexual activity and sexual reproduction results in the separation of sexes, wherein the lack of privacy and reducing calories is intended to minimize the potential for revolts and to diminish sex drive. However, rape and sexual violence are common elements of mass internment and specific forms of coercion and torture. In Nazi concentration camps, female prisoners were selected and forced into brothels for the pleasure of guards and wealthy prisoners (Myers 2011; Myers & Moshenska 2013). In La Glacerie, Normandy, a PoW camp guarded initially by the United States, and later handed over to France, Germans traded cigarettes for prostitutes who were snuck into the camp wearing American military overcoats (Early 2013).

Of utmost importance in the archaeology of internment are the stakeholder communities because inmates invariably survive particular events and so can participate in the subsequent investigation. "Many internment sites teeter on the edge of living memory, and oral historical research can reveal an enormous amount of information of use to the archaeologist" (Myers & Moshenska 2013). In addition, artifacts often stir memories of witnesses about the place, so they serve as mnemonic devices (Moshenska 2010). Unfortunately, excavations also risk opening old wounds and re-



igniting past animosities between communities thus researchers must pay special care not to incite unease among survivors (Buchli & Lucas 2001; Moshenska 2008).

Additionally, the final report can have far reaching implications that are the unintended consequences of the archaeologist. Politics can have an unsavoury influence in manipulating the results of an investigation to further an agenda that renews deep animosities between ethnic groups (Moshenska 2008; Verovsek 2015).

### **2.3. Commemoration Versus Heritage**

Commemoration and heritage are the twin tropes motivating discourse in conflict archaeology because place and memories affect the individuals and communities who may want to preserve or erase these monuments to oppression. Both can stir up dormant passions and cause people to take direct action. One such example was “Operation Let’s Dig!,” a guerilla excavation in Berlin in 1985 carried out by civilians and former prisoners held at the headquarters for the Gestapo, SS Reich and the Secret Service during WWII. The site had been bombed by the Allies at the end of the war and in the 1950s the government attempted to demolish the remaining structures by declaring them no longer sound. The citizens viewed the demolition as an act encouraging social amnesia. Before they could act, construction of the Berlin Wall barricaded the site until 1985 when the clandestine excavators finally breached the foundation walls of the prison cells. From this point, a living museum known as the *Topography of Terror* grew up around the site, appropriating the walls of the prison as their exhibition space (Moshenska 2008). The sentiments that drove the excavation were rooted in the slogans, “Grass must never be allowed to grow over it” and “the wound must stay open” (Moshenska 2010). These citizens felt a duty to ensure that the horrors perpetrated at this site should not be excised from the public memory and to avoid repeating such a history (Moshenska 2008; 2010).

A separate excavation in East London excavated the remains of a row of four terraced houses bombed during the Blitz in WWII. Nearly four thousand individuals visited the site during the community excavation project. Twenty people came forward and reported living in or close to the houses at the time of the bombing. The materials

excavated became mnemonics that triggered memories for those who had lived through the bombing. Upon completion of the excavation, a multi-faith service of remembrance honoured those killed in the Blitz. Prior to back-filling, the site turned into a place of commemoration for individuals, families and communities (Moshenska 2007; 2009).

Such excavations speak to an unexpected source of healing. The site is re-opened only temporarily to enable the victims to remember and recall their history with these places. Handling artifacts and bringing forward memories has proven cathartic for those who were wounded by war, mentally or physically. Back-filling that archaeologists do by habit does not mean burying the past to foment amnesia. Instead, it can be the final act of closing an emotional wound (Buchli & Lucas 2001; Moshenska 2009).

## **2.4. Summary**

Control, surveillance, domination, resistance, cooperation, prison economies, gender, sexuality and stakeholder communities are the fundamental issues examined by archaeologists researching confinement sites within the context of the material culture record. Archaeological research has implications for stakeholder communities, as often there remain survivors of these traumatic events. Although the archaeologist's intent may be to remain neutral in presenting these findings, political powers can use or misuse archaeological research reports to further political agendas.

## **Chapter 3.**

### **The Morrissey Internment Camp: Historical Context**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

Morrissey was a small mining town in the Elk Valley of southeastern British Columbia before the march of history breached its isolation. It became an internment camp during the Great War when xenophobic patriotism stirred into existence and culminated with the arrest and detention of Austro-Hungarian and German foreigners living in Canada. When news of war arrived, the Elk Valley had the highest military recruitment numbers across the province as nearly every able-bodied man enlisted. It was also home to large numbers of emigrants from the warring countries, which yielded mixed emotions towards the foreigners (Laycock 1994; Norton 1998). In this chapter I chronicle the complex issues, such as the Ukrainian diaspora, that led to the creation of this internment site. As European geopolitics paved the way to the Great War, the Canadian Internment Operations responded with a policy that included the establishment of the Morrissey Internment Camp.

#### **3.2. Ukrainian Diaspora**

Prior to 1917, Ukrainian geography displayed the line of influence separating the Habsburgs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Romanovs of the Russian Empire. Although multiculturalism was a feature of these empires, with a strong correlation between social class and ethnicity, Ukrainians were peasants in both. Capitalism was well entrenched in Western Europe, whereas feudalism continued its reign in Russia and Austro-Hungary well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As with other mass migrations, the Ukrainians'

diaspora was directly related to the restructuring of property relations that resulted from the collapse of serfdom (Satzewich 2002).

Indentured Ukrainian peasants shared a common fate in both empires, which meant the provision of labour services or cash payment in lieu of labour. Workers could expect to give 3-6 days of work per week, and in certain circumstances, peasants were required to contribute up to 75% of the production of their farms to the landlord in the form of a tax payment (Satzewich, 2002).

Landlords regarded peasants as property and routinely restricted their personal freedom so they worked where told, sold their surplus to select buyers, and even married to enhance the landlord's prosperity. In return for this contribution, the landlord had an obligation to provide for the peasants in times of crop failure, epidemics, catastrophes and had to allow peasants access to common lands when they needed fuel, food and grazing pastures for their livestock (Satzewich 2002).

Austro-Hungary abolished serfdom in 1848 and the Russians followed with administrative reforms in 1861. Although regarded as free men, nevertheless taxes levied on them compensated landlords for their loss of land and labour. In Russia, a 20% tax was imposed and those unable to pay it had no choice but to exchange their labour. Common lands, pastures, woodlands, streams and lakes, which had previously been free, were suddenly subjected to rent. Consequently, newly freed peasants only gained more debt and thus sought loans to pay their taxes, purchase seeds, tools, rent for pastures and monies for marriages and funerals. Interest payments ranged between 52-104%, and up to 500% in extreme cases. Defaulting on the loan meant eviction and their lands being sold (Satzewich 2002).

Out migration from Russia began in the late 1880s with educated classes from developed agricultural areas moving into modern regions and cities, whereas illiterate individuals from poorer farming regions moved into agriculture frontiers (Satzewich 2002). Between 1871-1890, 7000 migrants moved to Asiatic Russia and many dispossessed Ukrainians settled in the frontier lands of Siberia, Kazakhstan and the Russian far east. The following decade, the annual average increased to 108,000 and in the first ten years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it increased to 250,000 (Satzewich 2002).

Ukraine's diaspora turned westward too with many seeking land or wage labour in Canada and the United States. Most of those emigrating to North America were subjects in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, mostly from Bukovina, Galicia and Carpatho-Ukraine. Ukraine lost 2.5 million citizens between 1870-1914 when economic conditions inspired them to improve their fates in faraway lands. The Ukrainians who left Austro-Hungary during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were divided into two groups; those who hoped to make Canada a permanent home and those who viewed the migration as a temporary solution to their poverty. Permanent migrants moved with their entire families and left their citizenship behind in the old country to carve out a new life in British Columbia. Men whose aspiration that North America should be a temporary residence dreamt of returning home to pay off the family debt and purchase more land. However, saving monies proved difficult as low wages barely paid enough to support basic necessities. By the commencement of WWI, more than 80,000 had returned home disillusioned, while others abandoned their dream of returning to settle debts and purchasing new lands (Luciuk 2001, 2006; Satzewich 2002).

Between 1891-1914, North America became home for the largest group of Ukrainian settlers, with 250,000 from Galicia and Bukovina taking Canadian citizenship. (Satzewich 2002). Canada aggressively recruited immigrants because this country had initially hoped to settle its western provinces with immigrants that exuded British character. However, the federal government recognized that a large-scale settlement of the west would not occur unless it expanded the scope of immigration to include the southern and eastern borderlands of Europe. Government policy offered cash bonuses to would be immigrants and paid shipping agents in Europe for every person they could persuade to choose Canada. In order to deter recruiting the destitute and indigent, the Canadian government required that all families possess a minimum of one hundred dollars (Satzewich 2002).

Ukrainian households that were part of the first wave of immigration (1890-1905), were mostly farmers who settled in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. For the first years as homesteaders, most family units worked for wages for part or all of the year. Men worked in railway construction or for wealthier farmers, while women worked as domestics in cities or nearby farms. After 1905, Canada's immigration policy changed to

reflect its growing industrial economy and focused its recruitment of industrial workers thereby creating a working class of Ukrainians in the prairie cities and in the frontier regions of Northern Ontario and British Columbia (Satzewich 2002).

Ukrainians had emigrated from Europe as destitute peasants causing much angst with Canadians over how they would fit into North American society. The Federal Minister of the Interior believed that Ukrainians could make good citizens but likened them to “beasts of burden who were biologically suited to the hard labour needed to homestead on the virgin prairie” (Satzewich 2002). However, a majority of the Anglo-Canadian elites felt an urgent need to keep the country white and remained “skeptical of whether Ukrainians could ever think, be and act like white people” (Satzewich 2002).

### **3.3. Events Leading to the Great War**

Emperor Franz Josef ruled the Austro-Hungarian Empire for the seven decades prior to WW1. His kingdom was a large political entity that encompassed 700,000 square kilometers of central Europe. Its citizens comprised ethnic folk who identified as German, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Ukrainian, Slovak, Slovene, Croatian, Serb, Italian and Romanian (Llewellyn 2013; MacMillan 2013). The empire had been defeated by Prussia in 1866 leading to the Ausgleich Compromise Agreement between Budapest and Vienna the following year. This created the Dual Monarchy between Hungary and Austria, re-establishing the former as an independent state in the process. It tended to promote two separate sovereign states, but the countries united in all policies with the exception of military, foreign and tariff policies. After the loss to Prussia, Vienna actively sought to renew its prestige with economic exploitation and expansion in the Balkans (Tucker 1998).

During the same period, Slavic nationalism emanated from the independent state of Serbia, which sought to unite all southern Slavs and threatened the Dual Monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Serbia shared the Cyrillic alphabet and Christianity with Russia and this commonality ensured Russian support. In an effort to mute the Serbian effort, the Austro-Hungarian Empire annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, cutting off Serbia's access to the Adriatic Sea. A deeper feud ignited between the two countries when

Austro-Hungary played an active role in creating the independent state of Albania, a country that Serbia had invaded during the first Balkan War (Tucker 1998).

The Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) laid the groundwork for the German Empire to become the leading European military power. Its later alliance with Austro-Hungary was an effort to diplomatically isolate France from the other great European states. Germany had been unsuccessful in its attempt to ally with both Russia and Austro-Hungary, as the latter's designs for the Balkans incited a feud with Russia. Germany openly sided with Austro-Hungary for two reasons: (1) their large German minority population already shared a common language and culture and (2) the Dual Monarchy was considerably weaker and was susceptible to persuasion. However, unbeknownst to Austro-Hungary, Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck also signed a secret Reinsurance Treaty in 1871 with Russia, essentially promising both Russia and Austro-Hungary support during the Balkan War (MacMillan 2013; Tucker 1998).

However, in 1890 tensions grew between these signatories as Germany failed to renew the Reinsurance Treaty and began tightening credit on Russia. Fear of a strong German alliance fomented a reluctant alliance between Russia and France. By the start of the Great War, a Triple Alliance had formed between Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy, balanced by the Entente between Russia, France and Great Britain (MacMillan 2013; Tucker 1998).

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, then heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, had a vision to modernize the constitutional structure of the empire. One possibility was to create a 'Trianism' allowing Slavs to share equal power with the Empire and another was to create a centralized government in Austria that was solely responsible to the Emperor. Determined to prevent it from coming to fruition, a Serbian separatist cell took advantage of Ferdinand's visit to Bosnia on June 28, 1914 and assassinated both him and his consort Sophie (MacMillan 2013; Tucker 1998).

Not being without rivals, the archduke's assassination proved a fortuitous coincidence in Vienna and Berlin where a long awaited opportunity to seize control over Turkey and Eastern Europe suddenly materialized. A localized war with the Serbs would

bring the Balkan territory into the empire and so on July 28, with Germany's backing, Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia (Tucker 1998).

However, Germany, concerned about fighting a war on two geographical fronts, France and Russia, took advantage of the phony war. While Russia mobilized its troops, German soldiers invaded France through neutral Belgium. Great Britain, remaining neutral until this point, immediately joined the war effort. Italy, although allied with Germany, initially remained neutral. Meanwhile, within a few weeks of the start of the war, Japan became an ally of Great Britain. For its part Turkey joined with the Central Powers of Germany and Austro-Hungary. The United States (U.S.) did not enter the war until 1917 and only after Britain intercepted a note from Germany promising Mexico American land should they attack the U.S. (Tucker 1998).

### **3.4. Canadian Internment Operations**

As the reality of the Great War set in, the relations between the Germans, Austro-Hungarians and the Canadian government reached a breaking point. What began with a promise to uphold the status quo ended with the arrest and internment of 8,579 male prisoners, 81 women and 156 children in twenty-four internment camps across Canada (Morton 1974). Of this total, only 3,138 could ever truly be considered military prisoners of war (Luciuk 2001; Vernon Morning Star 2011). Internees included 5,964 Austro-Hungarians (Poles, Croats, Ruthenians, Slovaks and Czechs), 99 Bulgarians, 2009 Germans, 205 Turks and 312 "Miscellaneous" (Francis 2008; Kordan 2002; Luciuk 1999; 2001; 2006). Within this past decade, the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund (CFWWIRF) put forward claims that the majority of those identified as Austro-Hungarians actually came from a Ukrainian background (Luciuk 2006).

Canada's census report of 1911 noted that in the total Canadian population of seven million were 393,320 Germans and 129,103 Austro-Hungarians prior to the war. German-speaking people had been well established in Canada, with 18,000 immigrating after 1901. By contrast, and largely due to the desperate situation of the Austro-



Hungarians in their homeland, the 20<sup>th</sup> century dawn featured a mass exodus of 90,000 persons (Luciuk 2001; Morton 1974; Satzewich 2002).

War, as always, engendered an environment of fear and uncertainty that exacerbated the extant hostilities towards Germans and Austro-Hungarians. Prior to the outbreak of hostility, nation-building and populating the prairie west drove government policy (Morton 1974; Satzewick 2002). Talk of war was anathema to recruiting the settlers who would fulfill those objectives.

However, pre-war English popular fiction described the Germans as agents and apostles of militarism. Pre-war debates in the Canadian Parliament, and recorded in hansard, about the readiness of the navy contain warnings of Germany's ultimate plan for world domination. While they were ideal settlers for the prairie provinces, because they were well-financed and regarded as extremely industrious, their fellow neighbors did not trust them as they worked too hard to promote language and cultural preservation among their kin (Keshen 1996; Morton 1974).

Austro-Hungarians were treated with hostility equivalent in weight but varied in nature. They were grouped together and labeled as Galicians, although many were Poles, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Czechs and Croats (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 2001; 2006). Galicians were considered an uneducated, poor, destitute underclass who were willing to accept low paying jobs in miserable conditions. Destined to be common labourers in railway and construction gangs, as well as farm hands, they nevertheless were seen to threaten the livelihood of a well-established working class (Morton 1974).

At the onset of the Great War, Canada focused on a foreign military threat and arrested former German officers and reservists and ordered the Militia Department to monitor the movements of suspected Austro-Hungarian officers and reservists. During these first few weeks, thousands of German and Austro-Hungarian citizens, regarded as enemy aliens, fled across the United States border. Canadian authorities did very little to stop them as they preferred to avoid any friction with the U.S. lest they inadvertently arrest and imprison an American citizen (Luciuk 2001; Morton 1974).

On August 8, 1914, Germans and Austro-Hungarian citizens were reassured that their relations with the Canadian government would remain positive as long as there was no evidence that they were aiding enemy countries. However, any officer or reservist who attempted to leave the country would be arrested. Eight days later, on August 13, the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP) and the Dominion Police were given the authority to arrest those whose departure may aid the enemy, or who were alleged to be engaging in espionage, attempting to transmit information or aided others with escape. However, those who signed an official undertaking to report in regularly, respect the law and maintain the code of strict neutrality were released. Scarcely a month later came the announcement that enemy aliens could continue to hold property and work as long as they did not help the enemy. Surrendering their firearms, ammunition and explosives would prove their allegiance to Canada. Nevertheless, two months later, 10,000 German and Austro-Hungarians were arrested and confined. Some did pledge their allegiance by signing the undertaking and were duly released (Carruthers 1978; Morton 1974).

As the Great War approached, and winter and the economic depression tightened their grip on the country, the problem of enemy aliens began to take on new dimensions. Unemployment naturally increased during winter months, as labourers were let go for the season from construction and railway gangs. Austro-Hungarians, foremost among the labouring population and now regarded as enemy aliens, were the first to be laid off and local municipalities that normally bore the cost of the local welfare system refused to support Canada's alleged enemies (Morton 1974; Roberts 1986).

Optimists expected that the Great War would be finished before the start of that winter but, upon confirmation that the end was not in sight, Prime Minister Robert Borden suddenly had the problem of the unemployed and destitute Austro-Hungarians and Germans. Detention centers were his solution and Borden circulated the query among his colleagues of which many replied, "Such a camp would be looked upon as a lazy man's haven" and "many men would be fruitful of expedients to get there" (Morton 1974: 37).

Prime Minister Borden sympathized with the plight of these ethnic folk and did not mind them crossing the U.S. border but acknowledged that few had any intention of observing their military obligations. However, with continued governmental pressure to prevent enemy aliens from returning to the front lines, the decision to imprison them under the pretense of preventing a famine became real thus shifting the Austro-Hungarian and German ethnic groups from the category of enemy alien to that of prisoner of war (Kordan 2002; Morton 1974).

There were two governing bodies responsible for this institutional process: the Department of Justice, which was responsible for defining the conditions that warranted internment whereas the Militia Department oversaw their custody. Major General Sir William Otter, a veteran of the Fenian Raids, the Northwest Campaign against the Métis in 1885 and the Boar War, was pulled from retirement and given the appointment of director of internment camp operations. Otter took care of the accommodation, rationing, maintenance, and employment of the internees. He also controlled guards from the Militia Department and was given access to the Dominion Police, the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP) and the Secret Service (Morton 1974).

The Hague Convention of 1907, signed by Britain on behalf of its empire, applied to all prisoners of war with the use of the term PoW typically applied to members of the military captured by the belligerent power (Jones 2008). Essentially, this meant that they held the right to the same standard of clothing, food and quarters as Canada's own soldiers. In addition to this, officers were entitled to a higher standard of accommodation and subsistence than men in the ranks and could not be compelled to work unless it was for their own comfort, health or cleanliness. However, the majority of internees were civilian, so Otter divided the first class into those who were officers and created an equivalency within the civilian population – educated and middle class (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 2001; 2006; 2011; Morton 1974). Since the Hague Convention of 1907 only truly applied to "military" PoWs regarding the civilian internees under the same umbrella was important in order for the camp labour to be considered legal. Today, since many were forced to labour in the camps, I consider the civilian prisoners as civilian PoWs since they were neither military PoWs nor civilian internees.

Otter further divided the group and separated Germans from Austro-Hungarians and was quoted by a Montreal reporter stating:

Most of the Austrians are working men, and although they might cause trouble if not kept under observation, it is the German commercial agents and men in similar positions, who are most likely to prove dangerous. They do not mix with the workingmen – they are educated, pushful, and intelligent, and many of them have seen service with the German forces [Morton 1974: 42].

Otter's policy kept the two groups separate, with the Austrians being housed in labor camps and the Germans in confinement camps (Luciuk 2001; 2006; Morton 1974).

Some women and children were also interned in both the Spirit Lake and Vernon camps. In total, 81 women and 156 children were confined as families, with another 40 women and 81 children remaining in close proximity outside of the camps and provided for by the Internment Camp Operations. Provisions included a scant allowance for food, fuel and rent that was administered through the local police (Carruthers 1978; Morton 1974).

Public opinion, social tensions and local pressures played a significant role in paving the way for the internment of Austrian-Hungarians and Germans. The government's intention was to prevent enemy aliens from heading to the front lines and also to alleviate the need for local communities to feed and house the unemployed. However, in trying to shirk their social welfare duties, many communities took advantage of this. Local officials would claim that "mysterious shots had been fired or that suspicious loiterers had been seen" in order to rid themselves of the municipal tax duties and have aliens arrested (Morton 1974: 39).

Justice was meted by the same local officers who arrested the foreigners. At the Stanley Barracks in Toronto, thousands of dollars and valuables were confiscated from prisoners without record, and made theft possible (Vernon Morning Star 2011). In Sault Ste Marie a local militia colonel threatened a young Austrian with an expectant wife with internment if he did not hand over his bankbook and mortgage (Morton 1974: 43).

Grave injustices in the internment camps came from the lack of proper winter clothing during those cold months, and were compounded by problems with latrine and washing facilities and inflated canteen prices. Work injuries and suffering were especially commonplace at the labour camps in Kapuskasing, where internees had logged and cleared six hundred acres of land and road. Hospital records noted a significant number of “chopped and frozen hands and feet” (Morton 1974: 47). In Banff, prisoners complained of cruel punishments, such as being hung up by their wrists (Morton 1974). Officers returning from France began working in the internment camps, which only increased the maltreatment. Records show several *note verbale* from Germany discussing the abuse of prisoners at Morrissey in British Columbia with a scandal so notorious that officers had to be removed (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 2001; 2006). Similar treatment was also noted at the Vernon camp (Morton 1974).

Suspect aliens from Saskatchewan and Manitoba were housed in Brandon, Manitoba and prisoners from Alberta were sent to Lethbridge. British Columbia initially had two federal internment camps in Vernon and Nanaimo, but gained four more at Revelstoke, Monashee/ Mara Lake, Edgewood, Fernie/ Morrissey, between 1914-1920. Alberta opened two more at Jasper and Banff/ Castle Mountain. The Canadian west also held stronger anti-alien sentiments than anywhere else in Canada and in British Columbia local resentment was at its peak because unemployment rates were typically much greater among foreigners (Morton 1974).

In order to help fund the internment camp operations, General Otter found work for the internees in land and road clearing in Ontario and road construction in the Rocky Mountains and in national parks (Francis 2008; Waiser 1994). In an attempt to legitimize labour camps Canadian officials interpreted the Hague Convention that stipulated, “military prisoners of war could only be compelled to work as long as it did not benefit Canada’s war efforts” (Kordan 2002:12). Therein they found their excuse to label all of the internees as military PoWs since civilian labour was illegal (Kordan 2002; Stibbe 2006).

There quickly became a check and balance system with reciprocal treatment for prisoners of war as British and Canadian subjects were being held captive in PoW

camps in Germany. A protecting power oversaw and conveyed the complaints of mistreatment, real or fabricated, between the warring countries. Between 1914-1917, the United States acted as the protecting power between Germany and the British Empire and after 1917, the task was taken over by Switzerland (Luciuk 2001; 2006; Morton 1974; Norton 1998).

Prisoners, who had participated in fighting and were German sailors and merchant seamen, were shipped to Amherst, Nova Scotia from Newfoundland and the West Indies at the request of Britain. For the most part, Otter had managed to separate Germans from Austrians with the former being interned in Amherst, Fort Henry and Vernon, and Austro-Hungarians in labour camps in Spirit Lake, Petawawa, and Kapuskasing. Smaller road-building camps were located in the interior of British Columbia and Banff, Alberta (Francis 2008; Morton 1974; Waiser 1994).

On January 1, 1916, Canada committed to sending half a million soldiers to war, but had fallen fifty thousand short of its previous commitment to send two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers to battle. Covering this deficit meant revisiting the argument that too many labourers had adversely affected the Canadian economy in 1914. It had become passé and a labour shortage was instead taking hold. Canadian food and agriculture, which supported the war effort, needed many more hands working in this labour-intensive industry. In addition, internment camps began to lose guards to the war effort as Canada's Military Service Act (1917) began feverishly enlisting more men. The replacement guards were notably those who did not meet the recruiting standards for active service (Morton 1974). Given the labour shortage, many internment camps began closing in 1916 and by the end of 1918 only Kapuskasing, Amherst and Vernon remained open. Kapuskasing finally released its last internees and closed on February 24, 1920 (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 1999; Morton 1974).

The Armistice Agreement terminated the war on November 11, 1918 and provided for the return of Allied prisoners. However, swapping prisoners held on Canadian soil did not occur immediately. On March 24, 1919, Arthur Meighen, the acting Minister of Justice proclaimed that "dangerous, hostile or undesirable prisoners would be deported as soon as possible and that \$75 would be deducted from each man's

impounded funds to pay for their passage” (Morton 1974: 58). However, due to shipping shortages and problems at staging camps that housed prisoners on the long journey, the first shipment of internees did not leave until July 24, 1919. By February 27, 1920, no more remained. The internment operations office was officially closed at the end of June 1920 when General Otter completed his final accounting of monies spent on the internment operations – a total of \$4,452,092.33 (Morton 1974; 58).

Conventional wisdom in the local communities as well as with political authorities in Canada during WWI held that internment and captive labour of civilians was normal. However, the local communities and government could only come to this conclusion by transforming their fellow citizens into enemy aliens, removing their presence from the landscape, and officially endorsing public amnesia. In Morrissey, many of the detainees had lived in the local community since 1897 and in the mines had worked side by side with those who supported their internment for many years. However, in order for the internment process to be successful, enemy aliens had to be regarded “as existing outside of one’s community” (Kordan 2002: 14, Robertson 2005).

### **3.5. Morrissey**

Several developments contributed to selecting Fernie and Morrissey as the site for internment camps in B.C. By June of 1915, Italy had entered the war opposing the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The provincial government was holding German and Austro-Hungarian miners on Vancouver Island and on June 8<sup>th</sup> of that year the Coal Creek miners went on strike and refused to work with enemy aliens. Leaders of the United Mine Workers attempted to halt the strike reminding the workers that a division of the union on ethnic lines would only weaken it and that the real enemy was the capitalist class, not their fellow mine workers. After much debate, the miners of British, Belgian, Russian, Italian and Montenegrin descent demanded with one voice that all Austro-Hungarian and German miners be removed from the employment of the coal company (Kordan 2002; Laycock 1994; Norton 1998).

As the strike continued into June 9<sup>th</sup>, a telegram was sent from Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Mackay, a military officer in charge of recruitment in Fernie, to William

Bowser, B.C.'s Attorney General and acting premier during Premier McBride's extended visit in Britain. Since nothing galvanizes an unpopular government like a convenient scapegoat, Mackay threw his support behind workingmen and the unemployed. Bowser responded to the telegram stating that the provincial government had already been planning to intern miners across B.C. and consequently gave orders to immediately commence internment in the Fernie area of all unmarried German and Austrian miners as well as married men whose families remained in Europe (Kordan 2002; Laycock 1994; Norton 1998). Bowser addressed the public and stated that interning these ethnic groups served two purposes: (1) communities could return to their peaceful ways and (2) increased employment opportunities for deserving men (Norton 1998: 69).

The Fernie police immediately ordered that single Austro-Hungarian and German men were "to report with blankets and belongings for internment" (Norton 1998: 70). The Conservative Association that represented local business interests proposed renting the abandoned facilities at Morrissey from the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company. The proposal was sent to Sir William Otter for approval. While waiting for his response, one hundred prisoners voluntarily reported in and were moved to the Fernie Skating Arena, which had been hastily rented by the provincial government. Although the internment order only affected miners, it was applied to the entire region. Thereafter, seventy-five internees arrived by escort from Michel, their belongings inspected for alcohol and weapons and monies confiscated (Laycock 1994; Norton 1998; Ramsey 1997).

Of the total 279 men interned by June 19, ninety were from Michel, sixty-seven from Natal, one hundred from Fernie, twenty-eight from Coal Creek, four from Cranbrook and the remainder from Corbin and Morrissey (Norton 1998).

General Otter sent Lieutenant-Colonel Duncan MacPherson to Fernie to report on the situation. His dispatches noted communities divided by those patriotic to Canada's war effort and those who felt a great injustice had been committed to their fellow citizens. Duncan further contributed ambiguity by voicing Otter's concern that the federal government did not support the internment of these foreigners. Order-in-Council PC2721 stated that "requirement of internment for those enemy nationals who were a threat to Canadian security, or those who were registered as reservists in the armed



forces of either Germany or Austria-Hungary” (Norton 1998). The internees relaxed once they realized that their release was imminent (Laycock 1994; Ramsey 1997).

However, miners at Hillcrest, Alberta followed Fernie’s suit and began striking on June 15 and the situation escalated on June 19 when 150 German and Austro-Hungarians returned to work. Although, the Federal Government believed that the internment camps in Fernie and Vancouver Island were illegal, it remained fearful of any disruption to wartime coal production. Hence, on June 26, the federal government issued an Order-in-Council that stripped all rights to habeas corpus from those interned. As the need for Canada to treat all internees under a single administration intensified, the federal government took charge of those interned in Fernie (Norton 1998).

Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Mackay was deeply opposed to the internment in Fernie, and perhaps for this reason ended up in charge of the operation. Immediately, he began looking for reasons to release internees and began releasing those who were unfit for military duty or were naturalized citizens of neutral countries. Of the 321 prisoners noted on June 30 he found reason to release 162 (Norton 1998).

Jailer/ prisoner relations proved difficult initially as there were no uniforms for the guards. Their only distinction was the newly acquired rifles that were standard issue for the guards (Norton 1998). Upon Otter’s inspection of Fernie, he noted 157 Austro-Hungarians (Slavic, Polish, Ukrainian, and Hungarian) and seven Germans (Norton 1998). He inspected the camp and proclaimed it satisfactory in condition but found the lack of uniforms to be a handicap. He also met with the local merchants, the mayor and members of the Crows Nest Pass Coal Company (CNP) to solicit endorsements for the Morrissey Camp. The CNP proposed to rent their Morrissey buildings at low cost while the local merchants were willing to provide low cost supplies. Otter approved the camp and six weeks later on September 28, the first prisoners were transferred and housed in the Windsor and Alexandria Hotels (Laycock 1994). Mackay continued in command of Morrissey until the spring of 1916 when he released another thirty-nine prisoners (Luciuk 2001; Norton 1998).

A Fernie lawyer, A. Macneil, whom initially felt unpatriotic representing the internees, did an about face and began representing eighty prisoners in an attempt to

secure their release. In 1916, the CNP was experiencing the same labour shortages that hit most Canadian employers during this period. William R. Wilson (CNP official), Mackay and Macneil began working covertly to have internees released so they could work in the mines again. They began lobbying for the release of "Morrissey's quiet and well behaved prisoners" (Norton 1998: 74). In June of 1916, seventeen PoW's from Morrissey were released to work above ground in the Coal Creek Mine and fifty prisoners from Banff were released to work in the Michel Mine. At this time, an unknown number of internees successfully escaped on a roadwork project near Cranbrook, B.C. There are no records of the escape in local newspapers and no surviving records of any military enquiry. However, after this incident there only remained seventy-seven prisoners in Morrissey and for the first time, the guards outnumbered the guarded (Norton 1998).

Consequently, Otter ordered restrictions on employment outside the camp due to the high risk of internees fleeing across the U.S. border. He also reduced the number of guards to better reflect their ration. As a well-respected war veteran, he believed that those in the military who had been detached to work overseas were of far better quality than those working in the internment camps. Those who remained were either middle-aged, rejected for wartime action or hoped to avoid overseas duty. Having more guards, he reasoned, would compensate for their lack of quality (Norton 1998).

As the war progressed through 1916, many more Austro-Hungarian prisoners gained their release to alleviate the nation's labour shortage. "Suddenly there were too many labour camps with too few PoW's" (Norton 1998: 79). Amalgamation was the solution, so five B.C. camps closed in a three-month period, only Mara Lake, Vernon and Morrissey remained open. This brought forty prisoners from Mara Lake to Morrissey and another fifty from Brandon, Manitoba. Of this lot only fifteen were of German origin and described as first-class prisoners (Norton 1998).

For the first time since the opening of the Fernie/ Morrissey camps, there was a necessity to segregate the first- and second-class prisoners. The 1907 Hague Convention created a distinction between first and second-class military prisoners. However, as these prisoners were civilians, the main distinction of their social status was

education. Proxy combatants such as Germans were considered first class (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 2001; Norton, 1998). Seven were initially interred there in 1915 with Austro-Hungarians labourers leading to a single category for this camp. A year later another fifteen transferred in and were housed in an adjacent and separate compound. The Morrissey Hotel, which initially housed the prisoners and was known as the “Big Building” was renamed the “Slav compound” as the first/ second class distinction became an ethnic divide between the groups (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 2001; Norton 1998).

Seventy more prisoners were transferred to Morrissey in October 1916 when the Lethbridge camp closed. A new two-story annex, next to the Slav compound accommodated the growing prison population. Its hasty construction meant extremely poor heating, earning the derisive epithet of “Ice House” among prisoners and guards alike (Norton 1998: 81). Overcrowding drew blame for the three prisoners who escaped from the first class compound, followed in quick succession by three from the second-class compound. Two months later a mass escape attempt took place through a forty-five foot long tunnel that led from the basement of the Slav Compound to the winter wood pile on the outer wall of the compound entrance. The tunnel was discovered in January 1917 when records note that the inmates were in “mild mutiny” (Norton 1998: 81,82).

There were two main issues that continued to plague the Canadian internment camps: work and food rations. As per the 1907 Hague Convention, internees could not be forced to do any work that would benefit the country imprisoning them. They needed only to work for their own comfort, health and hygiene. If prisoners volunteered to work, the government was required to pay them 25 cents per day. Many men worked for the city of Fernie before the internment camp opened and they wanted to continue their jobs. From the outset, many internees at Morrissey cut rock for road construction, which facilitated the mass escape by a road gang across the U.S. border (1916). General Otter then had his excuse to order that all outside work cease. In addition, tensions were growing between guards and prisoners as the second class prisoners refused to cut wood for the first class prisoners and the first class prisoners were not obligated to do so. Guards were finally ordered to cut wood for the first class prisoners and when some refused, military enquiries and punishments ensued. Records from January 1917 note

an increased use of solitary confinement cells and prisoner mistreatment (Kordan 2002; Laycock 1994; Luciuk 2001; 2006; Norton 1998).

Additionally, food rations and accommodations were required to be equivalent to what Canada provided for its own troops (Hague Convention 1907). Food shortages were known by June of 1917 and anyone not engaged in labour had their food rations reduced. This affected Morrissey, as it was no longer a work camp. A German Benevolent Society in San Francisco did intervene by donating \$75 per month, which the internees spent on additional foods from the Macdonald store in Fernie. Although the food supply did not directly affect the prisoners, they assumed that the food reduction was in fact a form of punishment for refusing to work outside of their compounds (Norton 1998; Wilson 1997).

Tensions had been increasing for some time prior to the food rationing and the Coal Creek mine explosion in April of 1917 immediately raised suspicion of enemy sabotage. Many of the Morrissey internees released the previous year returned to work at the Coal Creek Mine but were only allowed to work above ground. Although the mine explosion had occurred below ground, many of Fernie's local residents, as well as many in the military, believed that it was an act of sabotage. Once again the inmates felt that this was just another injustice thrust upon them (Norton 1996).

Swiss Consul Gintzburger visited Morrissey on August 25, 1917 to report on the camp. He noted that many prisoners had access to a large garden and that the buildings were clean and orderly. However, prisoners complained about the poor condition of beef they ate as well as the severe cold and intolerable conditions in winter in the Ice House. He diplomatically recommended that the prisoners form a committee to bring their complaints to the attention of the camp commander. Gintzburger submitted his report to his government but did not send a copy to Major General Otter, which led to discussions in the German Foreign Office. Coded messages between the British and Canadian governments mention Gintzburger's report clearly noting conditions in Morrissey as incompatible with conditions accorded Canadian soldiers. Given the article in the Hague Convention, the British War Office had strong, and valid, concerns about retaliatory treatment of Canadian and British soldiers confined in German internment camps. The

incident took until March 1918 to resolve through diplomatic channels. However, conveniently and only three weeks after the Swiss consul visit, Morrissey's commander installed a wood stove on the second floor of the Ice House. Once the German authorities learned of the improvements, the crisis was averted (Norton 1998).

Between 1916-1918, with the closing of Canadian internment camps and the amalgamation of inmates, the German population at Morrissey increased causing the Slav Compound to lose its title. In addition, there was a significant amount of aggression and suspicion noted in the records between the two groups, with friction being greatest between Germans and Austro-Hungarians. In April 1918, forty Austro-Hungarian "troublemakers" were transferred to the Vernon Internment Camp in order to alleviate ethnic hostility (Norton 1998: 88). By August, the population of both ethnic groups was equally divided and peaceful relations ensued such that a grievance committee formed a single cohesive unit to lodge formal complaints regarding the mistreatment. Formal complaints did not abate and the guards were consistently exonerated from the allegations (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 2001; Norton 1998).

In September 1918, the order closing Morrissey arrived. Seventy-five prisoners volunteered to work in a labour camp in Munson, Alberta and were transferred on October 13. Two days later the remaining were sent to Kapuskasing in northern Ontario. At this moment, the influenza struck and the guards accompanying the prisoners to Kapuskasing were hospitalized in Winnipeg. The last guards closed up the camp also fell ill and were delayed in Fernie (Norton 1998).

When the camp closed, the Free Press noted that the closure "was a blow to Fernie's economy" (Norton 1998: 90). Since mid-1916, the camp had held an average of four hundred individuals inclusive of guards, dependents and prisoners with ten percent of all internees across Canada imprisoned in Morrissey. The monthly salary of all guards grossed \$4,000 with local merchants supplying both prisoners and military (Laycock 1994, Norton 1998).

An unspoken understanding formed between the foreign-born and allied citizens that the local experience with the Morrissey Internment camp would remain a secret.

“Neither military personnel or prisoners seem to have left more than fragmentary written accounts to posterity” (Norton 1998: 91).

### **3.6. Summary**

Canada played an active role in recruiting Austro-Hungarian’s to homestead the western frontier. Due to the poverty-stricken climate of this ethnic class in Europe, the mass exodus of 90,000 Austro-Hungarians occurred at the start of the twentieth century. Many emigrated with desperate hopes to return home to pay off debts and purchase new lands or to remain and create a better life for their families in Canada. Even before WWI, the climate toward Austro-Hungarians, especially from the Canadian social elites, was cold as they voiced strong concern regarding whether these destitute immigrants could ever emulate their strong British character. This contrasted with the Canadian government who strongly advocated for these emigrants since homesteading and populating the western frontier was foremost on the agenda of Canadian nation building. However, low wages barely supported basic necessities and quickly terminated many of these dreams. Many returned home disillusioned while those who could not afford to leave remained with little hope of ever improving their socio-economic class. Those who remained, desperate to survive, were willing to take low paying labouring jobs removing work from the already established Canadian working class.

The German population in Canada, at 393,320 was two thirds larger than their Austro-Hungarian counterparts, and as an ethnic population they had already set down strong roots in Canada well before 1901. The German population was well-educated, financially secure and extremely industrious, making them ideal settlers prior to the commencement of the war and an open threat at the onset.

Although the majority of the German and Austro-Hungarian population had no intent of returning to the front lines to fight for their countries, fear, patriotism and paranoia led to the arrest and internment of the 8,579 Austro-Hungarian and German prisoners of war along with 81 women and 156 children.

## **Chapter 4.**

### **Methods**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Archaeologists, by rote, deploy methods appropriate to fulfill various stages of their research. Mostly they do not demand overt reliance on abstraction but they fall into categories such as field, laboratory or heuristic. They comprise the standard, recognizable practices that I employ for my site surveys and some that are specific to historical archaeology. For example, near surface remote sensing is now indispensable for non-invasive reconnaissance of the subsurface matrix, but oral history interviews and archives are not usually in the repertoire of the typical research strategy. In this chapter I report on the methods I used to accrue the data for this thesis.

My main goal was to bring this thesis to fruition, but matching the methods to the appropriate aspects of my study was critical. I began by identifying specific objectives for this research and selecting the methods that would help me elicit the most information. My field strategy included ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to survey the extent of the cemetery and to ascertain the number of graves within its perimeter. A metal detector was used to discover surface artifacts, and I brought along my digital camera to capture my observations. I completed my fieldwork by conducting a landscape analysis of the internment camp and cemetery. Reconnoitering the site directed my attention to archival data extant in government reports, police reports, newspaper reports, maps and photographs. This in turn led me to chronicle the lived experience that is accessible only by interviewing residents of the local community and descendants of the internees and guards whose vicarious accounts bring insights not found in archives.

Objectives	Methods
<p>◆ <b>Perceptions</b> Document how perceptions have changed over the past century</p>	<p>GPR &amp; metal detector to determine number of graves &amp; photography for visual records ◆ <b>Perceptions, Relationships</b></p>
<p>◆ <b>Ethnicities</b> Determine which ethnicities were interned at the camp</p>	<p>Archaeological landscape analysis to determine how the environment was constructed and perceived ◆ <b>Perceptions, Daily Activities, Relationships</b></p>
<p>◆ <b>Daily Activities</b> Determine how ethnic affiliation affected daily activities</p>	<p>Archival records: photographs, maps, newspaper reports, journals ◆ <b>Perceptions, Ethnicities, Daily Activities, Relationships</b></p>
<p>◆ <b>Relationships</b> Investigate varying relationships between ethnic internees and guards, community, members and government representatives</p>	<p>Oral history interviews with the community and descendant stakeholders ◆ <b>Perceptions, Ethnicities, Daily Activities, Relationships</b></p>

**Table 4.1. How each method contributes data to one or more objectives**

Before I begin my discussion on the methods I used, Table 4.1 outlines in tabular form where they fit in the context of my research. Given the cost of some methods, and the good graces of sponsors, I might only have one opportunity to generate data. Other methods, such as archival documents, continually bring forth new information. As a bundle they help me record and interrogate the documents or artifacts I uncover, but the oral history interviews speak more to the intangible relationships I created. I began with a preliminary site visit at which time I performed an intensive surface survey consisting of a visual inspection and some photography to record my initial observations. I prepared the groundwork for some later visits by making contact with local residents who were potential leads for oral history interviews.

## 4.2. Near Surface Remote Sensing

Two techniques for near surface remote sensing, ground penetrating radar (GPR) and a metal detector sweep of the site, produced significant data. I was able to determine the number and placement of graves in the Morrissey cemetery since Tipi Mountain Eco-cultural Services, a locally owned environmental consulting firm, received a grant from the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund (CFWWIRF) to oversee the GPR survey. Tipi Mountain Eco-cultural Services used the funds to contract



Maverick Inspection Ltd. from Edmonton, Alberta to conduct the GPR assessment work and considering that my thesis research was germane to this survey, the CFWWIRF created the link between Tipi Mountain, and myself to conduct the survey.

Although portable, the GPR unit has to travel an unobstructed path across the selected area and be in constant motion for the readings to yield a coherent image. So preparing the cemetery for the near surface remote sensing treatment entailed clearing of all vegetation, which included the removal of small trees, fallen logs and shrubs. Word of this endeavour spread in the community and it immediately received support and several residents who volunteered their labour to help with the clean up on July 13, 2014. Once conditions permitted, the technician pushed the GPR unit across the surface along a path intended for the greatest coverage and began recording telemetry of the subsurface. The raw data was then uploaded to a digital format and interpreted to produce a 2-dimensional image of the vertical profile as well as a plan view of the level where anomalies appear.

### **4.3. Metal Detector**

Metal detectors are effective tools for surveying historic sites because of the preponderance of metal artifacts present in the subsurface that are therefore susceptible to discovery. When no excavating is the only option they can be sensitive to several centimeters below ground, but this method was successful in locating a sample of artifacts in the surface debris. A local volunteer brought this piece of technology and operated it as a secondary instrument. While locating graves using the GPR was the intention, we did detect metal ornaments typically applied to mark graves.

Metal detectors are simple to use, cost effective and a reliable complement to intensive surface inspections. We examined the material culture from the surface of the internment camp and cemetery sites. The sparse artifact assemblage at the cemetery site was no surprise considering the impecunious conditions associated with the burials. Although the metal detector picked up additional signals, indicating more underground, they were left in their current provenance. A visual inspection of the old Morrissey site revealed many surface artifacts and the detector highlighted some buried objects.

#### **4.4. Archaeological Landscape Analysis**

An archaeological landscape analysis takes place at a higher level of abstraction than the remote sensing methods because it does not rely on any physical instruments. Nevertheless it contributes invaluable information about sites that might elude historians working in the archives. It links the *out of sight out of mind* impressions to the physical features on the landscape because internment's ephemeral nature has led to erasure from national history coeval with its vulnerability to shifting public perceptions.

Standing in the middle of the Morrissey Internment Cemetery is to be immersed in a dramatic geography that I attempted to record with my digital camera, though a photograph just captures an attenuated image of the landscape. From this vantage point I took note of the Morrissey Cemetery in relation to the internment camp and its visibility to a passerby. I followed the views extending away from the cemetery and observed the prominent topographical features. Within the perimeter of the cemetery I noted the direction of the burials, the type of cemetery markers, tombstones for signs of purpose imbued to this locale. For comparison I visited cemeteries of a like vintage in the vicinity to search for similar features as those I encountered. I wanted to observe the degree of difference between the treatment of both the prisoners and free civilians in death.

Morrissey Internment Camp lies 1.5km south and east from the cemetery, which is within its viewshed. While there I had the opportunity to conduct a similar analysis of the views outward from the internment camp. As I scanned and recorded its location in relation to its panoramic views and topographical features I was cognizant of the fact the town initially coalesced around a civilian aesthetic that was commandeered for internment. I explored the surrounding townships to get a better sense of the place and the setting of the built environment on the landscape.

#### **4.5. Archival Research**

Archival research, another method used to advance this research project, utilized textual and illustrative documents from private and public sources. During the course of my investigation I gathered archival data from military reports, maps and photographs. I

examined the newspaper reports and photographs curated by the local Fernie Historical Society to find reportage of events in and around the internment camp. I visited the provincial archives in Victoria to ascertain the information I could extract from its holdings. I contracted a private researcher in Ottawa to visit Library and Archives Canada on my behalf and to search its collection and then supply me with copies of pertinent documents. Another source was personal correspondence in the possession of the descendants of the internees, guards and citizens of the community surrounding Morrissey.

## **4.6. Oral History Interviews**

Personal accounts, though impressionistic and vicarious, complement archival records by adding details omitted from official reports. In the same way that a watercolour painting of a place captures elements that a black and white photograph of the same locale cannot, interviews enrich the narrative. Through my meetings with these relatives I discovered that family lore is full of anecdotes that can only come from the memories of witnesses.

I interviewed local citizen from Morrissey and Fernie who had a personal connection as descendants of internees and their guards. I also met descendants of the Spirit Lake and Castle Mountain/Cave and Basin Internment Camps. Prior to my arrival in Fernie, I had placed an advertisement in the local newspaper, the Fernie Free Press. In it I discussed my research and invited those who were interested to come out to the site and share their stories. Due to a technical error, the advertisement was not placed prior to my arrival. This proved fortuitous because Jemi Fiber Corporation owns the land with the internment cemetery site and Tembec owns the Internment camp. Both companies have strict policies requiring permission to access these sites due to liability insurance concerns.

However, one of my Fernie contacts, Corlyn Haarstad, was gracious enough to share my contact information with those who were interested in contributing information to my research. The newspaper eventually printed my advertisement, one week prior to the National WWI Internment Camp Commemoration Ceremony that was taking place

on Friday, August 22, 2014 in one hundred locations across Canada. Fernie, B.C., hosted one of those ceremonies at the site of the historic internment camp. At each interview I had a standard set of questions (Table 4.2) that I would ask of each participant, but I retained some flexibility so as not to discourage spontaneous digressions.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Have you heard of the Morrissey Internment Camp?</li><li>2. If no:</li><li>3. Are you surprised to hear about this part of our Canadian history?</li><li>4. If yes:</li><li>5. Do you know where Morrissey is situated?</li><li>6. Have you visited the area?</li><li>7. What types of activities take place there now?</li><li>8. Do you know what type of camp it was? (Refuge/ Internment/ Concentration Camp?)</li><li>9. What ethnicities were housed/ interned in Morrissey?</li><li>10. Was it a labour camp or confinement camp?</li><li>11. What were the prisoner's relations with the different ethnic groups?</li><li>12. What were the prisoner's relations with their guards?</li><li>13. What were the prisoner's relations with the local community surrounding Morrissey?</li><li>14. Do you have any artifacts from the site? (books, diaries, utensils, correspondence, pictures etc)</li><li>15. Did you ever speak with anyone from the internment camp (prisoners, guards, family of the guards) while it was in operation or after the camp closed?</li></ol>
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**Table 4.2. Launch questions for interviews with citizens of Fernie and Cranbrook, B.C.**

Note: Communities Surrounding Morrissey, B.C.

I completed several interviews in the time allotted to this purpose in Fernie, but I left with an unforgettable impression of life in the Morrissey Internment Camp. I also left

with a solid lead about another informant I could interview who had a direct connection to the place. Therefore, I travelled to Edmonton to conduct what I thought would be one more interview about Morrissey. While my interviewee provided new details and personal records, I was also directed to a group of people whose ancestors were detainees at the Spirit Lake Camp and at the Jasper/Castle Mountain Internment Camp. I conducted several more interviews, beginning with the questions included in Table 4.3, that were germane to my research despite their geographical distance. These interviews, 17 in total, provided insight into the general internment operations across Canada. They are personal stories about a national policy implemented at the Morrissey Internment Camp and other places, and the toll it imposed on the people whose lives it touched.

1. What is your relation to the Morrissey Internment Camp or other Canadian WWI internment camps?
2. Did you grow up in an internment camp?
3. How long was your father interned in Morrissey or other internment camps?
4. Was he transferred to other internment camps?
5. What was the reason given for his arrest and capture?
6. Were his personal belongings returned once he was released?
7. How was his health during internment?
8. What were the living conditions like?
9. Did he describe his treatment while interned?
10. Do you recall any stories that he told?
11. How did this affect your childhood?
12. Was your father part of the military or reserves prior to coming to Canada in his native country?

**Table 4.3. Launch questions for interviews with members of the descendant community**

## **4.7. Summary**

The GPR results provided much insight into what lies beneath the surface in the Morrissey cemetery, as did the metal detector. My landscape analysis contributed a better understanding of how the internment camp could cease to exist physically and to be expunged from the collective memory of our contemporary society. Due to the destruction of many of the government reports, the majority of the archival documents were incomplete. However, the interviews with the descendant community not only

provided insight into the specifics of the Morrissey Internment Camp but also the Canadian internment operations in general. My interviews with the citizens of the community surrounding Morrissey contributed to my understanding the portrayal of Morrissey today. Triangulating the three data sets; material culture record, archival reports and interviews, yielded a few insights about the changing perceptions of the Morrissey Internment Camp.

## **Chapter 5.**

### **Site Investigation**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

The Morrissey Cemetery, DiPr-4, is a registered historic site situated on private land owned by Jemi Fiber, hence permission must be sought before setting foot on the premises (Apland & Warner 1979a). Consumer Protection BC is responsible for the designation and licensing of all cemeteries in BC under the *Cremation, Internment and Funeral Services Act* ensuring that all burials are properly recorded. The Morrissey Cemetery is a registered cemetery under the cemeteries act (misspelled Morrisey, License number 15644, CPI number not located), however, it is considered inactive, meaning that it is not accepting new interments. According to these records, its registration status is regarded as an abandoned burial ground.

It is situated along the eastern side of the Elk River Valley, approximately 13 kilometers (km) south of the city of Fernie in southeastern British Columbia (B.C.). Specifically, Morrissey Cemetery is situated along the base of the north-south trending Morrissey Ridge, 1.5 km southeast of the former Morrissey Town site, DiPr-1 (Apland & Warner 1979b).





**Figure 5.1. Entrance to the Morrissey Cemetery, accessed via a logging road, which remains almost completely concealed on the landscape**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014

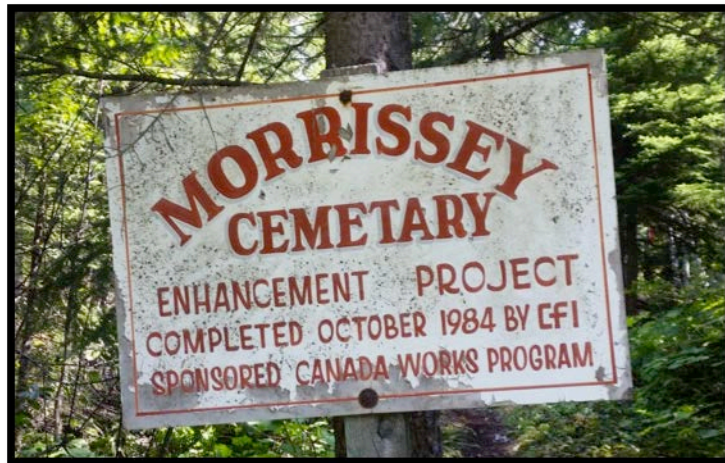
The cemetery lies on a small terrace with a gently undulating ground surface that slopes gradually toward the west-southwest, along the eastern side of the River Road Extension. A partially overgrown wagon trail, consisting of two parallel indentations considered “too narrow to have been a decommissioned resource road” (Moreau 2014) is the likely historical access path to the cemetery.



**Figure 5.2. Decommissioned Wagon Trail Leading up to the Cemetery**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014

Crestbrook Forrest Industries first restored the cemetery in 1984 and added signage with an obvious misspelling. With the overgrowth cleared, a fence was constructed around the observed boundary of the cemetery. A small, simple, wooden sign marked the entrance so as to prevent damage to the cemetery during timber harvesting (Moreau 2014a, 2014b). Although the sign indicates a connection to Morrissey, it makes no mention of the internment camp.



**Figure 5.3. Morrissey Cemetery signage, note misspelling**

Note: Author's photo, October 2013

The Morrissey Cemetery is hidden within a dense forested landscape and consists of seven marked graves, five still have their original "name plates". Figure 5.4 shows three contemporary graves enclosed by two metal-fenced plots indicating the burials of Marie Dvorak (1874-1929), Jan Dvorak (1889-1938), and Frank Dvorak (1906-1990). Jim Dvorak (son of Frank Dvorak) indicated that there are two additional graves within this enclosure: Joe Dvorak, deceased at age 15, and an infant who only lived to be a few months old (Jim Dvorak, personal communication, July 17, 2014). In proximity to the Dvorak plots are four PoW graves with small fences, each demarcated with a wooden cross (Figure 5.5). However, only two of these plots have surviving identification plates attached: Tom Ruzich (1870-1918) and Harry Smeryczanski (1899-1917). Correspondence with the local citizens contain references to six PoW graves whereas only four were evident during my inspection.

The archaeological investigation of the Morrissey cemetery and camp included a Ground Penetrating Radar survey to locate possible graves, an examination of the cemetery name plates and markers, locating surface artifacts and finally, undertaking a landscape analysis of the local and surrounding areas.



**Figure 5.4. One of the two fenced plots containing three contemporary graves belonging to the Dvorak family and situated at the northeastern end of the cemetery**

Note: Author's photographs, July 2014





**Figure 5.5. The four remaining civilian PoW graves in the Morrissey Cemetery**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014

## **5.2. Ground Penetrating Radar**

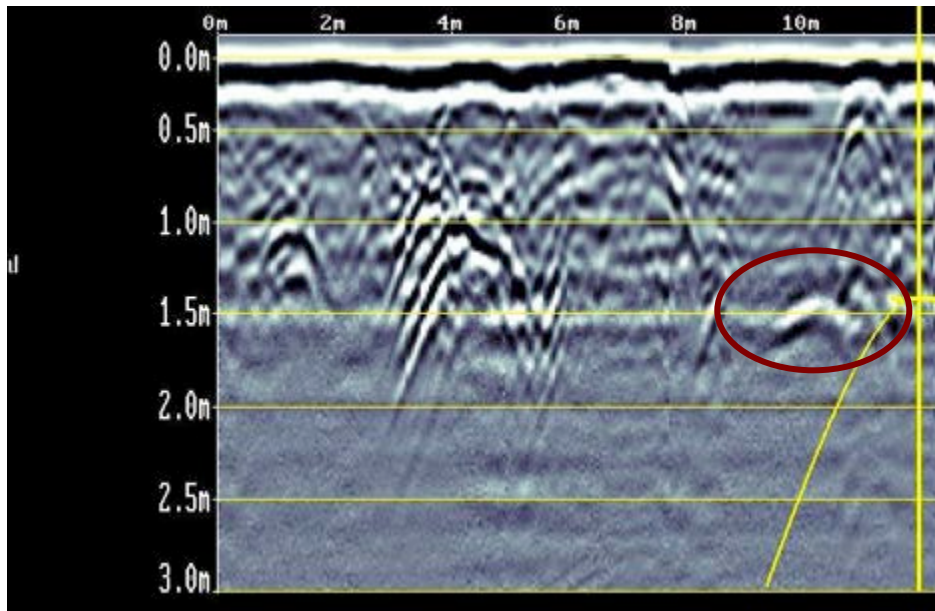
July 13 and 14, 2014 was spent clearing ground vegetation from the cemetery in preparation for the Ground Penetrating Radar (Figure 5.6). Maverick Inspections Ltd. began their onsite survey of the Morrissey Cemetery on the morning of July 15<sup>th</sup>. The GPR technicians determined that there were both surface and subsurface ground conditions that were going to negatively effect the GPR results: undulating ground, common forest detritus, intricate and mature plant root systems, gopher holes, stones, bricks and possibly other forms of human interference. Hence, they determined that examining the data in real-time in lieu of recording the data for post analysis would hold the best chance for success (Young 2014).



**Figure 5.6. Maverick Inspections Ltd. using the GPR in the Morrissey Cemetery**

Note: Author's Photograph, July 15, 2014

Using a Noggin 250 GPR unit, the technicians detected fifteen potential quality targets (probable burials) and marked these in the field with pin flags (Young 2014). In addition, five additional probable burials were detected and also pin flagged; three were noted based on their symmetrical 6 x 10 foot depressions and the other two with brick burial covers. Brick burial covers were common in the Elk Valley during this time period (Interview, John Gawryluck, July 15, 2014). Megan Moreau of Tipi Mountain Eco-cultural Services Ltd. subsequently marked in the GPS location of each pin flag and hammered in permanent wooden stakes. Of the twenty probable burials, seven were found clustered at the southerly end of the cemetery, very near to the four known PoW graves. The thirteen remaining graves were noted at the northerly end of the cemetery, and unlike the seven clustered graves, were evenly spaced and appeared to have consistent six-foot by ten-foot depressions (Figure 5.8). The GPR image in Figure 5.7 demonstrates the types of signatures marked with pin flags that indicate probable graves (Young 2014).



**Figure 5.7. Screen shot of a probable burial**

Note: Young 2014, reproduced with permission



**Figure 5.8. Picture noting probable burials in the northern end of the cemetery with symmetrical 6 x 10ft standard grave depressions**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014





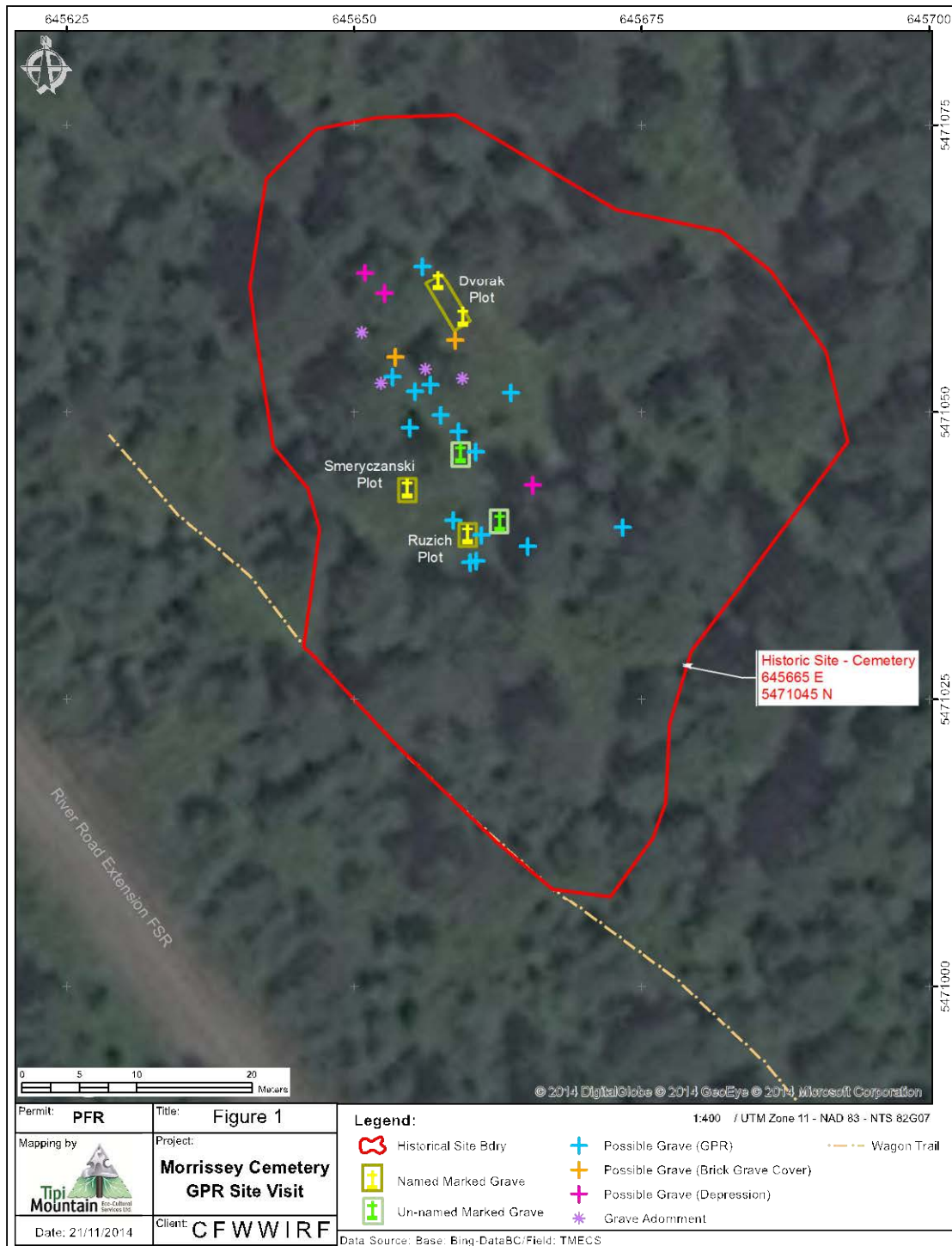
**Figure 5.9. Shows 7 probable burials, based on GPR data, found clustered around the existing PoW graves**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014



**Figure 5.10. Laid brick burial cover of probable burial in the north easterly end of the cemetery**

Note: Moreau 2014, photo reproduced with permission



**Figure 5.11. Morrissey GPR Grave map**  
Note: Moreau 2014, reproduced with permission



### 5.3. Cemetery Markers

The two surviving PoW burial markers are hand carved from local wood. According to the signage, their fellow Austro-Hungarian PoWs made these two markers. Jim Dvorak, whose family is buried in this cemetery, also remembers an angel hand-carved from cedar located near the known PoW plots that had a stone base that was stolen many years earlier (Local Fernie community member, personal communication, July 18, 2014). In addition, the Fernie Historical Society gave me a photograph of a German grave (Figure 5.12a&b), the ornately carved marker was made by fellow German internees. Further research revealed that in the 1970s, the German War Graves Commission exhumed all German subjects and reinterred them in Kitchener, Ontario, where they could be preserved and maintained in a single place (German War Graves Commission 2013). The photographs in Figures 5.12a&b and 5.13 note the visible differences between the ephemeral medium denoting the Austro-Hungarian nameplates of second-class inmates versus the durable carved-stone for first-class German tombstones.



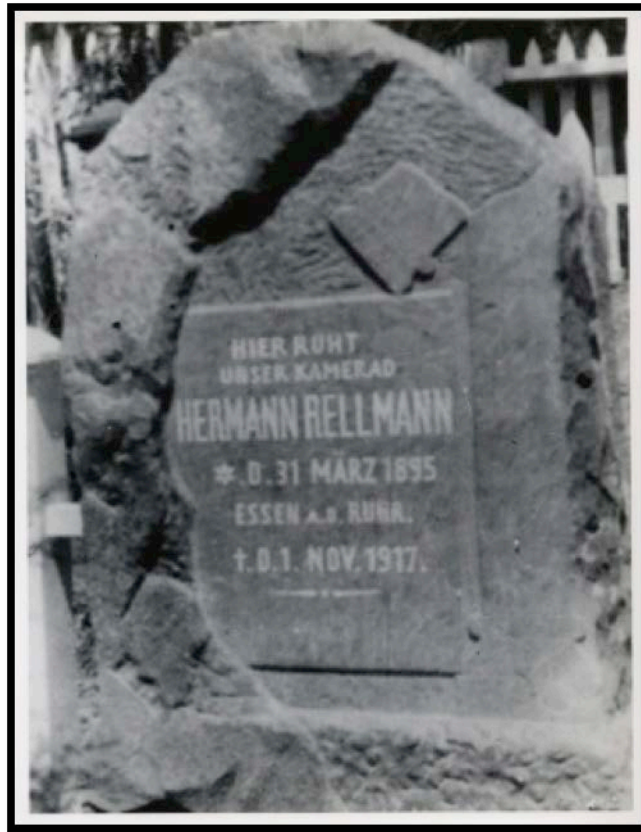
(a)



(b)

**Figure 5.12. The two existing Austro-Hungarian, second-class, civilian PoW grave markers: Tom Ruzich and Harry Smeryczanski**

Note: Fernie Historical society photographs, reproduced with permission, 0983, 0984



**Figure 5.13. Hermann Rellmann, first class German PoW's initial gravestone in the Morrissey cemetery**

Note: Fernie Historical Society, 3886do, reproduced with permission. Courtesy E. Hollinshead, photographer 1918



**Figure 5.14. Hermann Rellmann's new plot in Kitchener, Ontario**

Note: Lawrna Myers, reproduced with permission, 2014

In an odd reversal, the cemetery markers in the Vernon Internment Camp marking German graves consist of hand-carved, wooden crosses whereas the Austro-Hungarian PoW's have stone gravemarkers. In addition, internees from the Vernon Internment Camp were not subject to segregated burials, rather they were interred in the Pleasant Valley Cemetery, a public cemetery (Lawrna Myers, personal communication, November 8, 2014).



**Figure 5.15. Austrian PoW headstone at the Vernon Pleasant Valley Cemetery**  
Note: Lawrna Myers 2014, reproduced with permission, 2014)

#### **5.4. Surface Finds at the Cemetery**

A metal detector survey revealed artifacts on and just below the surface in the cemetery. For example, we found a hand-crafted metal wreath on the surface in one of the two unmarked, fenced PoW graves (Figure 5.16a&b). A hand-carved decorative wooden wreath was also noted in the other unmarked PoW grave (Figure 5.17a). In addition, a metal screw and spoon was discovered just outside of the PoW fenced graves (Figure 5.17b). At the northern end of the cemetery, we came across two brick grave covers, a metal flower pail, and cement flower holders next to the unmarked

graves (Figure 5.18a&b). Whether these symmetric graves are part the internment camp or antedate its presence remains unknown.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 5.16. Hand Crafted Metal Wreath located in one of the two unmarked PoW fenced graves**

Note: Author's photographs, July 2014



(a)



(b)

**Figure 5.17. (a) Wooden wreath located in one of the two unmarked PoW fenced graves; (b) metal spoon and screw located just outside of the PoW fenced graves**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014





(a)



(b)

**Figure 5.18. (a) Metal flower pail and (b) Cement flower holders associated with the potential graves located at the northern end of the cemetery**

Note: Author's photographs, July 2014

## **5.5. Morrissey Internment Cemetery – An Archaeological Landscape Analysis**

By tradition Christian burials orient along an east–west axis, with the head resting at the west side facing east (Deetz 1977). Despite the plethora of artifacts reflecting its religious affiliation, this cemetery did not follow that custom. Instead the deceased were buried with the head at the opposite end. This might be due to the fact that the cemetery lies on a hill sloping westwards, meaning that if the remains were buried in the typical fashion their heads would have been at the lower end of the slope, facing uphill. Although the graves face west looking down the mountain slope, there are no expansive views outward from the cemetery as the tree coverage is dense with no clear sightline of the internment camp from the cemetery or vice versa. Today, the cemetery is hidden up a logging road and has very few visitors, with the exception of hunters and those who enjoy off-road driving.

I visited several local cemeteries in the area to compare and contrast them with the Morrissey Cemetery. Two hundred yards south of the Morrissey Cemetery is a single grave dating back to 1903, which has an ornately carved headstone inscribed with the words “Gone but not Forgotten”. It is the resting place of a schoolteacher, Hannah Robinson and, most probably, her newborn infant. Based on her BC death registration information, I conjecture that Hannah died of tuberculosis and complications due to childbirth; her son passed away at two days old and Hannah passed away four days later, in March of 1903. Her gravemarker reflects the sharp contrast between the care and respect given to those highly regarded and cared for within the local community, and to the internees who died in the camp (Figure 5.19).

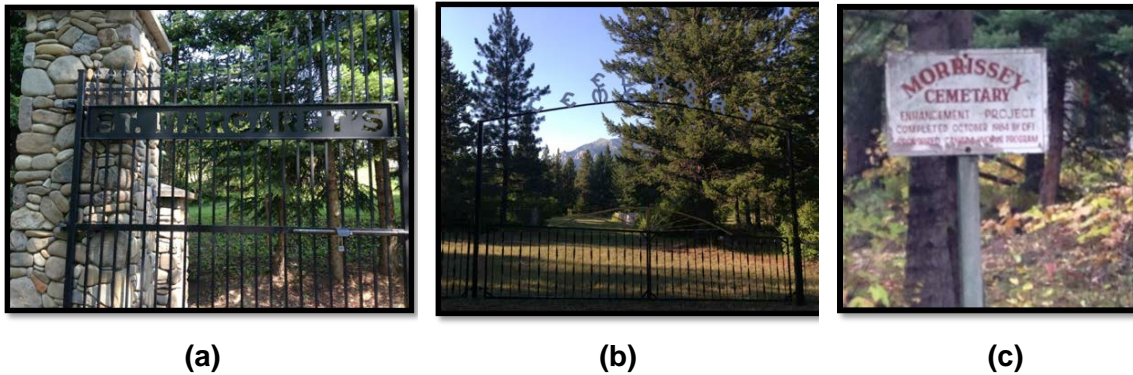


**Figure 5.19. Hannah Robinson’s elaborate, stone carved gravemarker inscribed with “Gone but not Forgotten” lies two hundred yards south of the Morrissey cemetery**

Note: Author’s photograph, October 2013

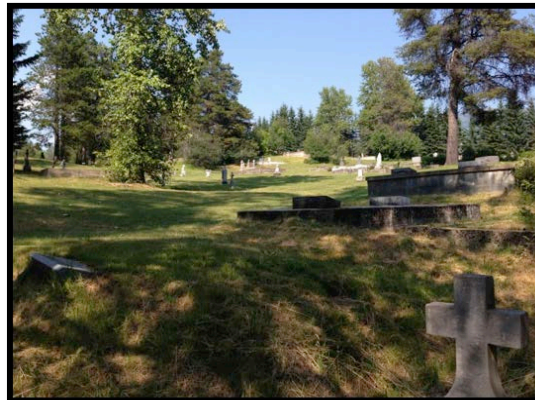
St. Margaret’s Cemetery, situated 13 km away in Fernie, features beautiful, ornate entrance gates and well-manicured lawns (Figure 5.20a). The gravemarkers, from 1915–1918, are all carved-stone, with some graves demarcated by a metal fence (Figure 5.21). None of the grave markers are wood, contributing to a sense of permanency. The individuals buried in this cemetery were mineworkers, guards, and

local Canadians—not enemy aliens. The Elko Cemetery lies 20 km south of Morrissey and, although considerably smaller than St. Margaret's, shares similar traits; a beautiful, ornate entrance gate, manicured lawns, stone markers, and an attempt to preserve the names of the buried (Figure 5.20b). St. Margaret's Cemetery is maintained by the City of Fernie and the Elko Cemetery by its own board. By comparison the Morrissey Cemetery (Figure 5.20c) has no official caretakers, however, both Jim Dvorak and Jim Rawson are the unofficial, albeit faithful guardians, who tend it.



**Figure 5.20. (a) Entrance gates of the St. Margaret's Cemetery (b) Entrance gate to the Elko Cemetery (c) Entrance to the Morrissey Cemetery**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014



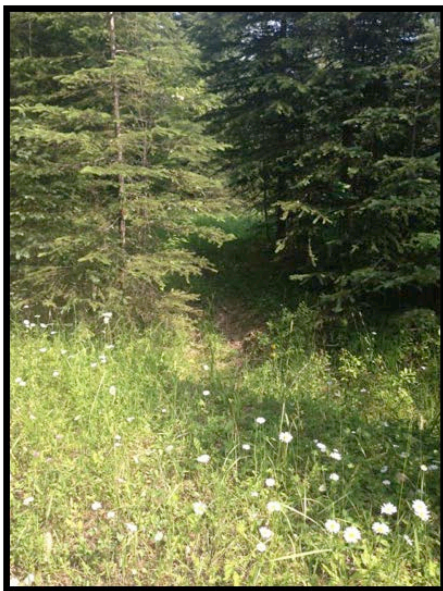
**Figure 5.21. Stone gravemarkers in the St. Margaret's Cemetery**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014



## 5.6. Morrissey Internment Camp - An Archaeological Landscape Analysis

As previously stated, the internment camp (DiPr-1) is situated 13 km south of Fernie and the camp itself rests in a densely forested area owned by Tembec (Figure 5.22a&b). Originally, the town constituted of three streets and six avenues. Looking outward from the town reveals an expansive view of the Morrissey, Flathead, and Lizard Mountain ranges. However, there is no clear sight line the eye can follow to the cemetery from the camp.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 5.22. Entrance path to the Morrissey Internment Camp – There is no signage to announce its past existence**

Note: Author's photographs, October 2013

There remains a significant amount of surface debris, which is from the Morrissey Internment Camp as the land remained vacant after the camp's closure. Those artifacts easily observable include ceramics, broken tea pots, metal bowls, broken lanterns, pots and pans, metal pails, jars, fence posts, bricks and a cement platform for an unidentified building (Figure 5.23).





**Figure 5.23. Morrissey Internment Camp surface artifacts**  
Note: Author's photographs, July 2014

## 5.7. Summary

The location of the Morrissey Cemetery, which lies up an old logging road, remains extremely secluded as it is situated on private property owned by the Jemi Fiber Corp. The Morrissey Internment Camp, 1.5 km south of the cemetery is also located on private property owned by Tembec, a Forestry company. Both sites require permission before entering the premises, hence, few visitors other than hunters and four by fours venture into this area. Other than the Morrissey Cemetery signage, which does not indicate that PoWs are interred here, there are no other indicators of what once was. Both sites have also been reclaimed by forest, camouflaging them from view.

There are no buildings that remain on the internment camp site, only surface artifacts, that also remain hidden from the untrained eye due to the current overgrowth of grass, shrubs and trees. Until the cemetery was cleared of surface debris in preparation for the GPR analysis, the overgrowth of small trees, shrubs and grass also concealed much on this hilly landscape. The four remaining PoW fenced graves, with two still holding nameplates, were the only obvious remaining evidence of Morrissey Internment Camp's existence. However, once the cemetery was cleared of all the surface debris in preparation for the GPR survey, grave depressions quickly became apparent as evidenced with the two brick-laid grave covers, flower pots and flower pails resting at the base of certain graves, the symmetrical 6 x10 foot depressions that match standard burials from other local cemeteries and finally, the GPR results that note fifteen additional potential graves.

It is interesting to note the contrast between Hermann Rellmann's elaborately stone carved gravestone, a first-class German PoW, and the two beautiful, wood carved Austro-Hungarian, second-class PoW grave markers. This visible distinction was also apparent when examining Hannah Robinsons' stone carved tombstone, two hundred yards south of the Morrissey cemetery as well as the stone carved tombstones of local Canadians, mine workers and guards who were laid to rest in the St. Margaret's cemetery, 13 km away in Fernie and the Elko cemetery 20 km south of Morrissey. These two cemeteries strongly differ from Morrissey's hidden existence, with their well-manicured lawns and welcoming entrance gates announcing the cemetery's presence.

The significant difference between Hannah Robinsons' grave, the St. Margaret's and Elko Cemeteries and Morrissey being that the former three clearly attempt to preserve the names, history and dignity of those buried there. In addition to the deliberate attempt at Morrissey's historical erasure, the desolate, private and forested environment has contributed greatly to the ephemeral nature of the Morrissey Internment Camp and Cemetery.

## Chapter 6.

### Archives Research

#### 6.1. Introduction

Library and Archives Canada	Department of Defense Mobilization files; records of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the Department of the Secretary of State; the William Doskoch Fonds; John Gawryluk Fonds; Prime Minister Robert Borden's diaries; the head of internment operations General Sir William Dillon Otter's diaries; Swiss and American consulate letters
B.C. Archives	Police Superintendent GR-0057 "Aliens and Enemies" files (German and Austrians); Morrissey Mention newspaper; the Fernie Free Press newspaper; the District Ledger newspaper
Fernie Historical Society and Museum; Sparwood Museum	Maps, photographs
Local Community & Descendant Community	Maps, photographs, newspaper reports, artifacts; Swiss consulate letters

**Table 6.1. Archives Consulted**

Listed in Table 6.1. above, are the archives that were consulted for my research. There were many more museums that I contacted and sought information from, however, none held information pertaining to Morrissey Internment specifically. Of interest was access to an obscure collection of files, the Police Superintendent GR-0057 "Aliens and Enemies" files (German and Austrians). However, the GR-0057 files were a restricted collection in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA). I was obligated to complete a research agreement as well as an undertaking as the records were covered

by the YCJA, and required final approval from a Provincial Court Judge – a condition for records under section 126 of YCJA.

Morrissey, the Internment Camp, is an artifact of WWI and brought about the cemetery because it was in operation. Antipodal perspectives diverge around its purpose as an internment camp rather than a refuge for destitute foreigners. Initially, I scoured the archival records indiscriminately looking for any documents not appearing in any literature review pertaining to Morrissey specifically and the Canadian Internment Operations in general. Once I compiled these documents, I focused my search more specifically to shed light on the ethnic groups interned at Morrissey. I wanted to determine if it was a labour or confinement camp, as well as to infer the relationships between the internees and the local community, guards and government officials. I wanted to gain insight into their treatment during this time period. A key goal of this archival research was to match as many corresponding PoW names with PoW numbers that I came across in the fragmented documents. Otherwise, the internees would remain merely anonymous numbers clouded by the fog of war. My aspiration is to reclaim their identities that perhaps one day can be traced back to family members or friends.

On its own, each item (most of which are incomplete documents) offered only a piece of this historical puzzle. However, once I had compiled the disparate fragments from numerous sources, several themes became clear. I compiled data on mortality in Morrissey, sentiments toward enemy aliens prior to and during internment; violence and abuse toward prisoners, escapes, description of first- and second- class prisoners, the labour camp, PoW families living in Morrissey, the description of the internment quarters, and finally, inmate pastimes.

## **6.2. Known Deaths in Morrissey**

Today, four graves mark the location of the Morrissey Internment Cemetery. As previously noted, two of these are labeled: Harry Smeryczanski and Tom Ruzich. Through my investigation I can now put names to the remaining two graves. Archival notes indicate they belong to Mike Katalinick, PoW 335, and Hermann Rellmann, PoW 257 (LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294). A letter sent to the German Consul in May 1918,

from forty Morrissey internees notes Mike Katalinick is “in a hopeless condition (tuberculosis)” and links this to his “ill-treatment” by “camp-police” (Doskoch 1993).

Tuberculosis (TB) was rampant in B.C. in the early 1900’s and in addition to Mike Katalinick, both Harry Smeryczanski and Tom Ruzich passed away from TB. Photographs of tents erected within the confines of the internment camp during a fever epidemic of 1915 suggest a very rudimentary health care response to the outbreak. The *Morrissey Mention* describes “La Grippe” sweeping through Morrissey before Christmas in December of 1916, filling the hospital with no fewer than 27 cases (Morrissey Mention [MM] 21 December, 1916). Another influenza epidemic, probably the Spanish Flu, occurred just as guards were closing up on October 15, 1918. At the peak of the outbreak, between Oct 25–November 24, 1918, 55 Fernie citizens passed away from the flu and were buried at St. Margaret’s Cemetery (City of Fernie Burial Records 1899-1948).



**Figure 6.1. Bell tents used to quarantine sick PoWs during the fever epidemic of 1915**

Note: Fernie Historical Society reproduced with permission, 3890do, Courtesy E. Hollinshead, photographer 1915

Inmates attempted to notify diplomats from their mother countries to intervene on their behalf and secure better access to medical treatments.

Hermann Rellmann, who is suffering from acute kidney trouble, the Commandant informs me that this prisoner will not live very long [Swiss consul letter 17 Sept, 1917, LAC, RG6, vol. 766, file 5610].

Secret correspondence with the Swiss consul also adds insight into illness in Morrissey and substantiates the potential for other deaths.

Beside Rellmann (who died 1 November, 1917), there are two Germans in the hospital suffering of heart trouble, one of these, K. John, is also suffering from rheumatism, confined to the bed and as he has told us today, in a deplorable condition. The other, Albert Heidner, was so weak the day before yesterday, that he had to be brought to bed [Secret letter from PoW's to the Swiss consul dated 5 October, 1917, LAC, RG6, vol 766. file 5610].

It is a very serious and sad fact, that many prisoners, about one third of the camp, are complaining, that their hearts are seriously affected by the high altitude. Their condition is getting worse every day and if they are not moved from here to another climate they fear that they will become as sick as H. Rellmann (PoW 257) who is still in a very bad condition, and who, last year was always complaining about the heart [Secret letter to the Swiss consul letter dated 5 October, 1917, LAC, RG6, vol. 766, file 5610].

From the dismal tone in a letter sent to the German Consul from 40 internees that were transferred from Morrissey in April of 1918, imply that Mike Katalinick, who had tuberculosis, did not survive.

Some fellow prisoners have been arrested under false charges and taken to the guardroom by the camp-police. On the way to the guardroom and inside of the guardroom they were hit with fists and kicked by guard or Camp-police. Several of these prisoners fell sick in the consequence of such ill-treatment, especially No. 335 (Mike Katalinick) and 188 (Mike Belish). No. 335 is at present in the isolate hospital in a hopeless condition (tuberculosis) [Doskoch 1993].

In addition to the known PoW deaths, there were two documented deaths of guards at Morrissey. William Edwards, a soldier and the infamous bugler at the camp, passed away on January 25, 1917. However, unlike the PoWs, the guards were buried in the Fernie Cemetery ([MM] 26 August, 1916). His obituary reads:

#### A Fine Record

There are few men who have a finer military record than Bugler W. Edwards, of the "E" Co. 107<sup>th</sup> E.K.R., formerly corporal in the old Cameronians, now the Scottish Rifles (sic), who served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Batt., 26<sup>th</sup> in India and with the 2nd Batt., 90<sup>th</sup> in South Africa. Edwards joined

the British army June 13, 93, being a Glasgow man, and was sent to Aldershott and from there to Portsmouth, from which great naval base he sailed to India's coral strand. Shahjahanpore, Barielly, Lucknow, Nowshera, and other stations were visited during the next few years. Then came the South African war and with a draft of 150 men in January 1900, sailed for the seat of war to Durban and was with General Warren's division, under Sir Revvers Buller, in Lyttelton's brigade at Spion Kop, where he was wounded and at Greylingstadt. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cameronians did some great work up Spion Kop, and after the war Edwards received the Queen's and King's medals. Bugler Edwards had the misfortune to lose a leg, but he can blow a bugle like an angel.

Pte. Frederick Halliday, the other guard who passed away in Morrissey on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1917, died by suicide due to alcoholic melancholia. Initially, Pte. Halliday was unceremoniously interred in the Morrissey cemetery but was exhumed a few days later, so that Fernie civil authorities could conduct their inquest. The civil investigation concurred with the original inquiry and made a special expression of disgust with the manner in which his remains had been treated. Pte. Halliday received an ignominious burial because he took his own life, but it indicates how prisoners' remains were treated:

The evidence was conclusive as to cause of death, but the jury when viewing the remains had noted the apparent un-benevolent manner in which the last rites had been performed upon the unfortunate man, mute evidence of which was a most crude imitation of a casket.... It was learned that the body had been interred at Morrissey in a roughly constructed casket in a grave which was half filled with water and without any religious service being held. The resentment of the jury at such an occurrence happening in a civilized community is mildly expressed in the rider, which they appended to the verdict returned [FFP, 4 May, 1917].

His treatment by fellow soldiers may have directly influenced the manner in which he died, as suicide was considered cowardly. During the Great War the British and Commonwealth executed 306 of its own soldiers for cowardice in the Shot at Dawn Campaign, including 25 Canadians whose names still do not appear on official war memorials (Taylor-Whiffen 2011). Regardless, he was military and yet they were willing to treat a fellow soldier in this manner once he fell out of favor with them. Thus, the prisoners of war likely received harsher treatment, potentially leading to more deaths and more graves in the Morrissey Cemetery.



### 6.3. Germans and Austro-Hungarians in British Columbia

At the start of the war, public resentment directed toward Germans and Austro-Hungarians crept into Canadian society. Fear and paranoia stalked individuals who immigrated from enemy territory and antipathy grew from the impression that they had taken jobs from many of the locals causing large-scale unemployment. Albert Bauer, applied to the local school district in 1914 to rent a school in order to teach German evening classes to the local German community. A letter from Jas Browne, the chairman of the Department of Education, brings to light some of the prejudice imposed on foreigners during the war. His response states:

We want the Germans settled in Canada to forget that they ever were Germans and to become Canadians and to use the English language. I know nothing of this Bauer. I do not like the looks of him. One pro-German may do much harm in a district like this, filled with a German population. We do not want German taught. We want English. We do not want the English sneered at. If you say the board of trustees should let him have the schoolhouse I will withdraw my opposition. He is conducting these classes in several school houses in this neighborhood. I object to the man and his being a German and his teaching German. If there were no war it would be different [Signed Jas. Browne, Chairman, Department of Education, LAC, RG24, vol. 4661, vol. 2].

After further review, A.R. Cuthbert, Deputy Minister from the RNWCMP responded to the Chairman of Education on December 19, 1914:

I object to the idea of teaching German, but am compelled to admit that German education (not culture!!) is better than no education at all, also we must admit that one hour in English is better than none at all [LAC, RG 18, Royal North West Canadian Mounted Police Fonds, vol. 1768, Part 4].

However, from the start of internment in 1915, the Fernie Free Press openly reported concern about the rights of the foreigners. Blame for a miners' strike was not strictly a question of nationality nor the misconduct of the enemy aliens and that the Canadian miners did not have the automatic support of the local community. In addition the Fernie Free Press reported that several prominent figures in the community including Mayor Tom Uphill and Mr. W.R. Wilson, an official with the Crows Nest Past Coal Company, adamantly spoke out on behalf of the internees.

We are not aware of all of the facts which led up to this action on the part of the miners and it is possible that the aliens may have made themselves so obnoxious that loyal citizens felt called upon to clear out the undesirables. If however, the alien enemies were attacked simply because of their nationality, then the striking miners need not look for praise from fair-minded citizens" [Ferne Free Press, FFP, 25 June, 1915].

"Why are they not interned?" These questions are frequently asked and deserve an answer. That is why we venture to suggest that the alien enemies have rights which should not be lost sight of [FFP, 25 June 1915].

Mr. W.R. Wilson and Mayor Tom Uphill not only fought for the internee's rights but also for them to remain close to their homes as an alternative to internment. Many of the so-called enemy aliens, although not naturalized, were in fact property owners and the war threw open the question of whether their land and other property could be revoked. Upon arrest all real estate and securities were turned over to the Custodian of Enemy Alien Properties and there is not indication that these assets were ever returned after the war.

...While nearly all of the men interned were employees of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Co., neither he (W.R. Wilson) nor the company had been consulted in the matter. He was very much opposed to the internment of such men as they were without exception good law-abiding citizens and now that these men had been imprisoned he thought that it was only justice that they should be kept as close to their homes and friends as possible [FFP, 20 August, 1915].

Mayor Uphill also spoke briefly upon the situation. The men interned were nearly all personal friends of his and he would vouch for their peaceful character. He did not think there was justification for their internment but if there was, they should be kept close to the town where many of them were property owners [FFP, 20 August, 1915].

When arrested many of the PoW's owned property. General Otter noted, as many of those interned were residents of Canada and possessed real estate, securities, etc., such have been turned over to the "Custodian of Enemy Alien Properties" for the future decision of the Government [FFP, 14 December, 1914].

Although the Fernie Free Press did voice initial concerns about the internees and their welfare, racial comments and jokes riddled the Morrissey Mention Newspaper, which was the camp newspaper. Such was the spirit of the times that the writers could openly express their contempt.

#### A Sad Tale

The S.M. and a Corporal had a hot argument as to which smelt the worst – a goat or a Turk. To decide it they drove a Morrissey goat into No.201 tent. The inhabitant promptly fainted. After he came to, they pushed in a captured Turk. – the goat died! [Morrissey Mention [MM], 16 September, 1916].

### **6.4. Violence and Abuse Toward Prisoners**

Prisoner abuse appeared in many forms and Consul Gintzburger from the Swiss Consul became one of their greatest advocates while the internment camp operated. On one occasion he submitted letters of complaint directly to his government, bypassing the censorship meted out by officials in Ottawa. This caught Canada and the British Empire off guard and caused a note verbale and threat of retaliation with British and Canadian PoW's from Germany should the conditions not improve (LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294). In addition to his many visits to the internment camp, he actively sought wealthy Germans in the United States to donate funds to help alleviate the deplorable conditions of both the German and Austro-Hungarian internees.

On the recommendation of the Commanding Officers of the camps, I immediately sent a shipment of flour, macaroni, evaporated apples, dried prunes, cheese, mustard, as extra rations for the men in these camps. Now, Sir, what I sent are not luxuries, but just ordinary necessities, which prisoners in criminal institutions receive, and the fact that the list was made up by the Commanding Officer himself, proves that the unfortunate prisoner do not receive a sufficient variety of food. I think that some wealthy Germans in the United States should provide me with about \$200.00 to \$250.00 per month so that I may be able to alleviate the conditions of their countrymen in the prison camps [Letter from Swiss Consul General Samuel Gintzburger to Dr. Paul Ritter 21 February, 1917, LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294].

Domination and power relations were also noted in petty instances. In January of 1917, M. Cowch (PoW 198), filed a complaint because the guards destroyed his prescription pills. Although the incident occurred in January it was not investigated until September 1917. During the court hearing the sergeant defended his actions by stating:

My instructions were to destroy certain Newspapers and Periodicals from the U.S.A. whether in German or in English and also to destroy all Patent Medicines from outside of Canada [LAC, RG24, vol. 4661, vol. 1]

Order in the camp was often maintained by punishing the entire camp for the actions of a few. When two prisoners successfully escaped on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1918 from the camp garden the entire camp suffered the consequence.

The closing of the garden on Aug 23<sup>rd</sup> for one week was a measure of discipline in connection with the escape of two prisoners from this Garden and for which they all suffered alike [LAC, RG6, vol. 766, file 5610].

Violence against prisoners peaked wherever there was a hint of rebellion. A censor read all correspondence that internees held with the outside world. Should a prisoner write anything questionable, it was automatically redacted and resulted in punishment. On March 6, 1917, F. Von Appen (PoW 393), was given 48 hours of cell time for writing, "You do not need to send me literature of any kind, because the Censor won't pass it, the Canadian newspapers do not tell us the truth but only filled with lies" (LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294). PoW 365 Hugo Rack, was awarded 96 hours detention for the following which appeared in a letter addressed to his wife dated March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1917:

...You are writing me about my detention, this is not a detention but a black hole of India, I was here for several times put in the cells. First time for 7 days, because I would not stand the Commandants lies (means obey) 2<sup>nd</sup> time for 3 days in cells, because I enjoyed myself when I heard the news that the Murderer of South African women and children was drowned (referring to Lord Kitchener) 3<sup>rd</sup> time for 8 hours for refusing to sign the Pay-Roll, 4<sup>th</sup> time for 20 hours for refusing to work for the English [LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294].

Many records demonstrate that prisoners were beaten without reason and, though court records note blatant evidence of violence, the guards were invariably acquitted. Anton Denisker (PoW 195) received a severe beating on January 17, 1917,

while in a solitary confinement cell, and had to be removed to the Fernie Hospital 13 km away, instead of being treated inside the camp military hospital.

I was on Guard on the date opposite to my name (17 January, 1917), to my knowledge PoW 195 Anton Denisker who I just identified in the Compound was not assaulted in the Guard Room nor did I ever hear of such being the case. [Court hearing, signed statement by Pte George King, C.M. Crofton (Sergt), R Boardman, M,E, Beckwith, J.J, Meek (Sergt), Jas, Small (Cpl), 29 September, 1917, LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294].

Then...

I was on Guard on the dates opposite to my name, this was the date PoW 195 Anton Denisker was removed to Fernie Hospital about 2:00pm and I did not see anyone assault him nor did I hear of such being the case [Pte. C.M. Crofton statement, 19 January, 1917, LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294].

The prisoners in Morrissey often referred to solitary confinement as “the black hole” (Interview, 5 July, 2014, Ukrainian PoW descendant), and documentary evidence confirms just that: cells 2 feet wide and twelve feet long, containing no furniture except a swing-down door for a bed, and only bread and water given for days at a time. The few secret letters that made it out of Morrissey describe these cells being used often for any type of insubordination (LAC, RG18, vol 1769, part 53). In confinement cells, the internees could be exposed to sleep deprivation by a bugle “sounded for the first two days every half hour and for the last two, every hour” (sworn statement from Corpl William Tipper, March 15, 1918, LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294).

...In reference to the Bugle calls complained of by PoW Bauer, it was sounded for the first two days every half hour and for the last two, every hour [William Tipper Corpl sworn statement on 15 March, 1918, LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5295].

Boarded off from an unused room in the building, which is about twelve by twenty-five feet are two by twelve feet in size the partitions being about seven compartments about seven feet high, while the ceiling of the room is about ten and one half feet in height permitting ventilation from the entire room. The main room has two regular sized windows furnishing light. These compartments have no furniture other than a wooden door hinged against the wall to be let down as beds when they are occupied and are used for the punishment of insubordinate prisoners, they being confined for various periods on bread and water, alternatively three days on bread and water and one on regular rations, according to the term of imprisonment. I was informed that there had been but little use for these rooms lately, the last case occurring some time ago when a prisoner

struck a guard. He was given ten days as above described. The officer in charge pointed out that in order to keep discipline among some of the prisoners a punishment of some kind was necessary [LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part 53].

I was Corporal of the Guard on Feb 17, 1917. I remember the four PoW numbers 379, 388, 252, 365, being placed in the Cells for refusing to pick potatoes for their own use. The blankets were hung before the doors more to prevent a disturbance between the Troops and the PoW's on acct of the later using insulting language about the British Empire, principally by PoW Bauer. In my opinion he is the worst man in the Camp and causes practically all the trouble here [Sergt J. Meek sworn statement on 15 March, 1918, LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part53].

In a desperate letter to the German Foreign Office, a group of forty "troublesome" internees who had been transferred to the Vernon Internment Camp from Morrissey on April 2, 1918, noted that even severe illness such as tuberculosis did not protect one from the guards' wrath.

Some fellow prisoners have been arrested under false charges and taken to the guardroom by the camp-police. On the way to the guardroom and inside of the guardroom they were hit with fists and kicked by guard or Camp-police. Several of these prisoners fell sick in the consequence of such ill treatment, especially No. 335 (Mike Katalinick) and 188 (Mike Belish). No. 335 is at present in the isolate hospital in a hopeless condition (tuberculosis). Both these prisoners were with some others put into close confinement in April 1917, because they refused to do work outside of the wire fence, work which was not in the interests of the inmates of the camp. While in the cells, they were treated in the most brutal manner. Other civil P.O.W who refused to do such work were often sentenced to close confinement too, and during their time in the cells brutally treated and forced to do the most degrading kinds of work for the guards under the threats of bodily punishment if refusing to comply. Some prisoners, who called the O/C's attention to the condition, were told that the prisoners were liars.

...The civil prisoners at the Morrissey Camp are not allowed to laydown on their bunks during the daytime, even if they feel ill, tired or hungry, without a permit of the medical sergeant, who gives his opinion whether the prisoner is sick or not. Prisoners found on their beds at daytime, were punished with as much as 6 days in the cells at half rations and in spite of their feeling unwell immediately arrested and forced to do humiliating work for the guards in the guardroom. Anybody refusing to do this was treated with bodily punishment [Doskoch 1993].

## 6.5. Escapes

Very little official documented evidence of escapes from Morrissey Internment Camp remains within the archival record. However, excerpts from various sources (Department of National Defense Files: Mobilization Morrissey Internment Camp volumes 1, 2 and the Records of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and newspaper reports), suggest that escape attempts were frequent. Unfortunately, these documents frequently omit dates, thus injecting confusion in any timeline of events. However, a compilation of available information yields a bird's-eye view of the type of escape attempts, successful or not, as well as some insight into the prisoner-guard relationship.

On March 17, 1916, the Morrissey Internment Camp wrote to Victoria, Military District no. 11, requesting whistles to carry out "a system of emergency communication in addition to rifle firing" (LAC, RG 24, vol. 4661, vol 2). Simultaneously, a note from Major Ridgeway Wilson, Lt. Col to Military District no. 11 in Victoria (Norton 1998), on June 21, 1917 requested a horse to aid with the retrieval of escapees: "I recommend that this horse be transferred as it is necessary for rounding up prisoners in case of escape" LAC, RG24, vol. 4661, vol 2). These requests demonstrate that guards were ill-equipped to handle escapes.

During a court hearing, Lt. P.W. McLaine described the escape and recapture of PoW 450 (Mike Taranaveski) on April 16, 1918; his account is a disturbing reminder of the slight regard accorded to prisoners:

I saw the escaped Prisoner in the bush and I immediately gave chase and ordered Sergt Crofton to proceed down the track to prevent him from breaking towards Fernie. After hunting him through the bush for about three quarters of an hour I captured him and brought him back to camp. I fired several times at him with a revolver, but owing to the thickness of the bush I did not hit him, and only when cornered at close quarters did he surrender [LAC, RG24, vol. 4661, vol 1].

On November 15<sup>th</sup> (unknown year), William Hagenmeister (PoW 267), Ernest Schenkel (PoW 391) and Carl Radotz (PoW 392) successfully escaped while loading cord wood close to the Morrissey train station. An investigation and court hearing were held after every escape in order to interrogate both guards and prisoners as well as to

send a formal report to the Federal Internment Operations on Ottawa. Pte. William Clarkstone stated in the court hearing:

We brought back one load to camp and returned for another load, about one mile from camp on the public road, we turned into the bush and were in single file crossing a 12" plank, the PoW's were in single file just as I got over the plank the PoW 421 (John Worth) suddenly throwing up his hands, called out "porcupine" and backed into me, the other PoW's started to run and disappeared in the bush. I was carrying my rifle at the slope, I did not know what to do at the time. I took the remaining PoW 421 about one half mile back to another gang and gave him in charge of another sentry and sent the teamster back to camp to give the alarm and returned myself to the point of escape [LAC, RG24, vol. 4661, vol 2].

The Morrissey Mention describes how the provincial police teamed up with prison guards to usurp another escape attempt on October 12, 1916. However, PoW 295 (Reinhold Gregor) had better luck two weeks later and was successful with his second escape attempt on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1916. Camp reports state:

Great credit is due to Chief A. Dryden of the provincial police of Waldo, B.C. for his splendid initiative and resource in locating and capturing the two prisoners of war Nos 277 (Peter Nick) and 295 (Reinhold Gregor) who escaped on Friday morning last from Morrissey Internment Camp [MM, 12 October, 1916].

PoW 255 (J.E. Voltzenlingel, PoW 270 (W. Brown) and PoW 295 Reinhold Gregor escaped from Camp at about 7:30pm on Oct 25<sup>th</sup>, 1916. The night being unusually dark and stormy, with rain, so that it was almost impossible to see a man at a distance of a few yards [LAC, RG24, vol. 4661, vol. 2].

In January of 1917, guards prevented a mass escape when they discovered a forty-five-foot tunnel under the "Big Building" (nicknamed by the Austro-Hungarian second-class PoW's) just days before the getaway. Had the tunnel not been discovered, the majority of the PoW's would have escaped "under the wire"([FFP], 19 January, 1917).

On Monday a subtle conspiracy was revealed when a tunnel 45 feet in length was discovered leading from the basement of the big hotel building, in which the majority of the internees are quartered. The tunnel entrance was hidden by piles of wood stored for the winter heating



supply. The earth excavated had been cunningly distributed in various parts of the basement and furnace room.

Nothing official is being given out, but it is reliably said that consternation reigned among the internees when they learned that their secret was known to the camp authorities, and that a condition approaching mild mutiny prevailed. The situation, however, was promptly taken in hand by the guards and suppressed by the enforcement of more rigid discipline. Strict discipline will in future be maintained.

The manner in which the plot was discovered has not been revealed other than that an indiscretion on the part of one of those implicated led to the discovery. Four of the internees who are known to have made the tools used in operations of tunneling were placed in close confinement. These are supposed to be the ringleaders but it is thought that nearly all of the prisoners were aware of what was transpiring.

The tunnel for the distance it had been driven was parallel with the roadway leading from the trunk road into the camp to the officer's quarters. The assumption is that after being driven in this direction for a certain distance, by bearing off to the left a wooded thicket, lying below the brow of a small hill would be reached and a reasonably secluded exit could be made. Had the plot not been nipped in the bud a wholesale escape might have resulted when the tunnel was completed and the weather sufficiently moderate, so that exposure would not be a factor in a speedy get-away (Ferne Free Press, January 19, 1917).

## **6.6. First and Second Class Prisoners**

As Great Britain had signed the 1907 Hague Convention on behalf of her empire, Canada was entrusted to treat military prisoners of war in the same manner and with equivalent standards to Canada's own soldiers. Officers, designated as first-class, were afforded a higher standard of subsistence and accommodation and could not be compelled to work except for their own comfort and hygiene (Morton 1974). However, this became a problem that plagued the internment operations, as fewer than 3,179 individuals could be vaguely regarded as military prisoners of war, the remaining being quite obviously civilians (Kordan 2002; Luciuk 2006; Morton 1974). A tit for tat attitude ensued for the duration of the war and straddled the grey area between first- and second-class military PoWs, who held rights under the 1907 Hague Convention, and civilian prisoners of war, who did not.

As the majority of internees were civilians, General Otter divided the prisoners into first- and second-class based on nationality instead of military status. Pre-war Germans made up the social middle class, educated but untrustworthy, while Austro-Hungarians comprised the poor, destitute class, and were easily influenced by their German counterparts. With this reasoning, he decided to keep the Germans (first class) in confinement camps and the Austro-Hungarians (second class) in labour camps.

Internment for 279 German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners in Fernie began in June of 1915. The internee numbers continued to grow such that Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Mackay, in command of the Fernie Internment Camp, and himself a Fernie resident, opposed the operations and worked feverishly to release as many as possible. By mid-July of that year, 321 PoWs who were deemed unfit for military duty or held naturalization cards had been released, leaving 157 Austro-Hungarians and 7 Germans (Norton 1998). The initial 7 German PoW's were not segregated from the Austro-Hungarians as they were all working in the local coal mines together and were consequently deemed second-class.

As of September 1915, the majority of the PoWs were Austro-Hungarian but a labour shortage the following year compelled government officials to release them. This sudden departure forced the government to close some camps and amalgamate the remaining PoWs into the remaining few. More German PoWs began entering Morrissey in 1916 (FFP 1915, MM 1916, Norton 1998). Archival records from July 1916 note first-class German PoW's segregated within the confines of the hospital also known as "Big Building" while the camp erected a second building to house these better class prisoners.

The government provided clothing and basic necessities for the prisoners and was careful to create a visual distinction between the first- and second-class prisoners.

As a general rule the ordinary prisoners (Austro-Hungarian) were dressed in khaki overalls and coat or jumper and flannel or flannelette shirts. The better class of prisoners (first-class German) wore cloth suits and negligee shirts with soft collars. The stock at hand showed underwear of medium and heavy weight, and hose of a serviceable grade, logger's shoes with hobnails and clothes of good quality. [American Consulate Inspection August 14, 1916, LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part 53].



**Figure 6.2. Fritz Cohn, PoW 409, was considered a German first-class prisoner**  
Note: Fernie Historical Society, 3900do, reproduced with permission. Courtesy E. Hollinshead, photographer 1918



**Figure 6.3. Austro-Hungarian second-class PoW's**  
Note: Fernie Historical Society, 3884do, reproduced with permission. Courtesy E. Hollinshead photographer 1918)

## 6.7. Labour

The question of whether labour could be legally enforced in the internment camps appears to have posed an ongoing dilemma. Under the 1907 Hague Convention,

Canada found an ambiguous clause allowing military PoWs to be put to work as long as the task was unrelated to the war effort (Kordan 2002). Initially, internees were given an allowance of \$1.00 per month, to be spent at the camp canteen. However, prisoners who chose to work were paid 25 cents a day for their labour, of which half was withheld by the government and remained in a bank account in Ottawa only to be paid out at the end of the war. Some archival records note that internees who volunteered their labour were in fact paid 55 cents a day for their services of which 30 cents was immediately deducted by the government to pay for their room and board in the internment camp.

At the first meeting with General Otter in 1915, Fernie Mayor Tom Uphill and CNP Coal Company representative W.R. Wilson, along with several prominent business owners and military personnel, proposed using the prisoners for road improvement projects at reduced costs to the town. General Otter responded positively stating:

The question of working the men on the road was one which would be up to the Provincial government. A small wage of 25 cents per day was allowed the men for working and if the province would provide this and the tools required, the men could be put to work at any time. [FFP], 20 August, 1915].

The roads in the neighbourhood were very dangerous owing to the numerous curves and if the interns could be secured for improvement work, these defects could be greatly reduced at a minimum cost to Fernie [FFP, 20 August, 1915].

A visit to Morrissey in August of 1916 by the American Consulate noted:

The better class prisoners do not work and each man is given an allowance of one dollar per month for the purchase of tobacco, etc., from the camp canteen. ...

...The men work in the woods cutting a supply of fuel for the camp, and are detailed for clearing up around the buildings, cooking, etc. They are detailed in squads of probably twelve or fifteen a day for work in the woods, working from eight to eleven-thirty in the morning and from one to five in the afternoon. For this they receive twenty-five cents per day. The men who do not care to work receive one dollar per month for spending money. The men who prefer employment at this camp complained that they did not receive the one dollar per month spending money in addition to the amount earned [LAC, RG13, vol. 206, file 1750-1769, no.1261].

Evidently, the purpose for withholding partial payments from the internees was to ensure they had monies at war's end and also to motivate them to continue working, otherwise they could not afford to purchase luxury items, such as tobacco, from the camp canteen. However, these funds were never distributed at the end of the war (American Consulate Inspection August 14, 1916, LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part 53).

...A portion of the earnings of the prisoners is withheld by the authorities and placed to their credit in a bank at Ottawa to be held in a trust until the close of the war, the balance being turned over to them to spend as they may desire...

...The reasons given by the Ottawa authorities for the withholding of this amount is that they do not wish the prisoners be turned loose upon the community without funds at the close of the war [LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part 53].

It soon became apparent to the government that the civilian internees were quite aware that the clause in the 1907 Hague Convention only applied to military PoWs. One internee in Morrissey, Bill Doskoch, copied out the entire convention by hand as a reminder of their rights. However, labour was the only way to finance the camps, so means of enforcing the labour regime became paramount (Stibbe 2006). Hence, they were enticed into work by receiving only basic necessities and being charged high prices for tobacco or other "luxuries" that would make living conditions tolerable. If this did not achieve results, physical coercion ensued (LAC, RG6, vol. 756, file 3380).

No funds taken from Prisoners of War at your station have been received here since June of last. Have none of these prisoners received any money during that time from their friends? Money taken from Prisoners of War should be forwarded here monthly with a statement of prisoner to whom it is to be credited [LAC, RG6, vol. 756, file 3380].

You will please remit any monies taken from prisoners of war to the Director of Internment Operation, Ottawa and not apply them as suggested to the purchase of Canteen tickets. It is important that all funds received from the prisoners should be remitted and any charge for canteen tickets should be placed on the Pay-roll. There is no provision made for the purchase of canteen tickets by funds belonging to the prisoner and your payroll is to show the total amount of tickets issued each month. It is important that this regulation be absolutely adhered to [19 October, 1917, Staff officer internment operations letter to commandant internment camp Morrissey, LAC, RG6, vol. 756, file 3380].

And finally,

The amount of \$1.00 per month is no longer paid to Prisoners who have no credit in Ottawa and refuse to work for the upkeep of the camp....however prisoners who are on the sick list and prisoners who are considered too old for work are still given one dollar per month [Morrissey Commanant to Major General Otter 15 March, 1918, LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294].

The American consul who visited the camp on several occasions to check up on the conditions of the prisoners also noted diplomatically that forced labor was part of camp life, but it had become voluntary. However, further documentation notes that prisoners continued to be coerced for unpaid labor.

While at the present time the work of the prisoners is purely voluntary on their part, from what can be learned it was at one time compulsory [American Consulate Report, 14 August, 1916, LAC, RG18, vol 1769, part 53].

Until joining the war in 1917, the United States Consulate oversaw the Canadian Internment Camps (American Consulate Inspection August 14, 1916, LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part 53). However, once the United States joined the war efforts, the Swiss Consulate became the neutral party overseeing the internment camp conditions between Canada, Germany, and Austro-Hungary. The Swiss diplomat took to heart the plight of the prisoners and fought harder for their rights than his American counterpart.

I find that quite a number of prisoners have been punished for 'refusing to obey an order. On examination the Prisoners stated that invariably the "order" was a command to perform some work, of which they refused to do [Swiss Consulate visit 7 September, 1917, LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294].

The Swiss Consul made note on a visit to Morrissey, conducted February 8, 1918:

The prisoners complain of being forced to work and in being deprived of all camp privileges when refusing to do so. One man states he was compelled to workout outside of the Compound...They claim that they are deprived of the right to spend their own money at the canteen, this means that refusal to work prevents them from obtaining tobacco or cigarettes...In many cases the refusal to work would be followed by

physical coercion on the part of the guards resulting in protests by prisoners and strong language the consequence being aggravated punishment. [LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294].

## 6.8. Families in Morrissey



**Figure 6.4. Within the confines of the compound – a man with a child**

Note: Photo: [Morrissey Internment Camp, B.C.] ca. 1915-1918: Library and Archives Canada/Canada. Department of Militia and Defence fonds/PA-046200

Until now, only the Vernon and Spirit Lake camps were known to house families within their confines (Kordan 2002; Morton 1974). However, upon noting a picture of a man holding a young toddler within the barbed wire confines of the Morrissey Internment Camp, I began searching for further information. Library and Archives Canada (LAC) records note at least two separate families that lived alongside the internment camp and

also appeared to spend much time within the camp during the day. Just before curfew, the PoW and guards would escort the family back to their quarters outside (LAC, RG 18, vol. 1769, part 53). Leon Sauver's (PoW 219) wife Charlotte and two young boys, Ingo and Helgi, were allowed to remain in Morrissey (LAC, RG 6, vol. 765, file 5294). Another internee, E. Rosenhagen (PoW 224), also had a family there, but managed to escape from his tent in the German compound on a cold evening in November (year unknown) with his mother-in-law, child, and PoWs 217 (W. C. Schaenfeld) and 218 (Fritz Crome) (LAC, RG 24, vol 4661, vol 1).

Of the better class prisoners (German), all are either single or widowers, with the exception of two, one of these having a family consisting of a wife and adult daughter, residing in Manitoba and the other a wife and two small boys. The latter has requested that his family be permitted to reside with him at the camp, and the officer in charge has forwarded the application to the military authorities in Ottawa with a favorable endorsement [Camp inspection, 3 July, 1916 by G.C. Woodward, LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part 53].

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1917, the Royal Consulate of Sweden requested a list of names of the Austro-Hungarian prisoners interned across Canada. With this list the names of the German PoW's were included, which notes that Leon Sauveur (PoW 219) also had his family in the camp: Charlotte, Ingo and Helgi (LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294). Under separate documentation pertaining to escapes from the Department of Defense, Corporal Meek recounted:

Pte Clark called for an escort to take PoW 224 (E. Rosenhagen) out so that he could take his Mother in Law and child home, escort returned at 6:20pm with PoW 224 and he was put safely in No 1 (1<sup>st</sup> class) compound. The first I heard of an escape was about 10:20pm and I went straight from the guard room to no.1 compound and started to search in one of the Bell Tents I found the blankets bunched and a mallet at the head it was made to look as though someone was in bed and I found the blankets in the other tent scattered around as though someone had just jumped out of bed. PoW 217 (W. C. Schaenfeld) and 218 (Fritz Crome) escaped as well [RG24, vol. 4661, vol. 2].



## 6.9. Description of the Internment Quarters

An early account of the layout of the Morrissey Hotel responded to the request by G.C. Woodward, American Vice-Consul, on August 19, 1916. He reported that:

The hotel contains forty-two bedrooms at this time with twenty five on the third floor and seventeen on the second floor. The second floor also hosts a hospital room and dispensary while the first floor contains a kitchen, dining room, office and guardroom, wash-house, reading room and recreation room and the prisoners were housed in bedrooms of various sizes. The smallest was approximately 10 feet by 12 feet. Each room contained three to four cots with light mattresses and blankets. The bedrooms are unfurnished with the exception of the cots, a few chairs and small tables. The walls of each room are bare with the exception of photographs, post cards and wood carvings made and placed their by the occupant of each room [LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part 53].



**Figure 6.5. Morrissey Hotel, also known as the “Big Building” and later the “Slav Compound”**

Note: [Morrissey Internment Camp, B.C.] Morrissey, B.C., ca. 1915 – 1918. Library and Archives Canada/Canada. Department of Militia and Defence fonds/R112 Accession 1966-088 Box 03390, Item DSCN 8054



(a)



(b)

**Figure 6.6. (a) Morrissey Hotel dining hall; (b) Washing rooms**

Note: [Morrissey Internment Camp, B.C.] Morrissey, B.C., ca. 1915 – 1918. Library and Archives Canada/Canada. Department of Militia and Defence fonds/R112 Accession 1966-088 Box 03390, Items DSCN 8060, 8061



(a)



(b)

**Figure 6.7. (a) Living quarters hallway; (b) Morrissey Hotel kitchen DSCN 8062**

Note: [Morrissey Internment Camp, B.C.] Morrissey, B.C., ca. 1915 – 1918. Library and Archives Canada/Canada. Department of Militia and Defence fonds/R112 Accession 1966-088 Box 03390, Items DSCN 8060, 8061

## 6.10. Prisoner Pastimes

The consul noted on several visits that the internees at Morrissey were not interested in athletics but enjoyed spending their time off crafting artwork (Figure 6.10). They were extremely talented at woodcarving (Figure 6.8, 6.9), which included walking canes, picture frames, musical instruments, miniature villages as well as ships in bottles or light bulbs (Figure 6.10, 6.11) (Swiss consul correspondence Sept 17, 1917, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294). In addition, several of the internees opened a night school with the support of the YMCA in January, 1918 and taught classes in: English, French, German, Spanish, accounting, book and time keeping, Canadian banking, drawing, architecture, math, type writing, library studies, veterinary science, agriculture, steam engineering, practical farming, and theoretical carpentry. Internees were not paid for their time teaching fellow PoW's (LAC, RG6, vol. 5348, part 2). Records from the Morrissey

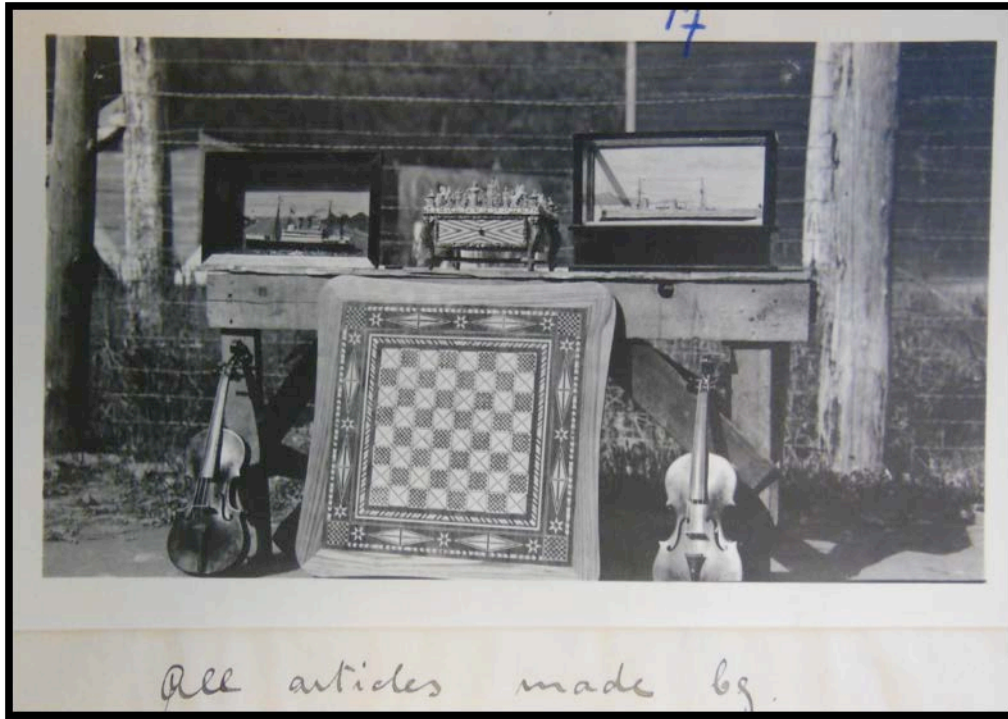
Mention note that several inmates advertised their services in the “Big Building” through the newspaper. However, whether they were paid for these services is unclear: Marco Mulder (PoW 189) advertised carved swagger sticks, Konrad Otto (PoW 256) watch and clock repairs, William Couch (PoW 197) carved war souvenirs, Ernst Peterson (PoW 237) camp barber, Harry Hanns Hoffka (PoW 282) fine mechanical watch repairs, and Albert Bauer (PoW 252) night school for soldiers with lessons in French, German and Arithmetic -- 50 cents per months each subject.

In this camp the prisoners do not go in for athletics games and sports as they do in Vernon, but a great many spend their time in the manufacture of walking canes, picture frames, carved ornaments of all description. Some turn out beautiful works of art [Swiss consul correspondence, 17, 1917, LAC, RG6, vol. 765, file 5294].



**Figure 6.8. Wooden cutlery made by a civilian PoW and gifted to a guard, Private collection, Fernie, B.C.**

Note: Author's photograph, July 2014



**Figure 6.9. Items carved by the PoW's to pass the time**

Note: 1915-1918, DSCN 8064, LAC File R112 1966-088, NPC Box 03390, reproduced with permission)

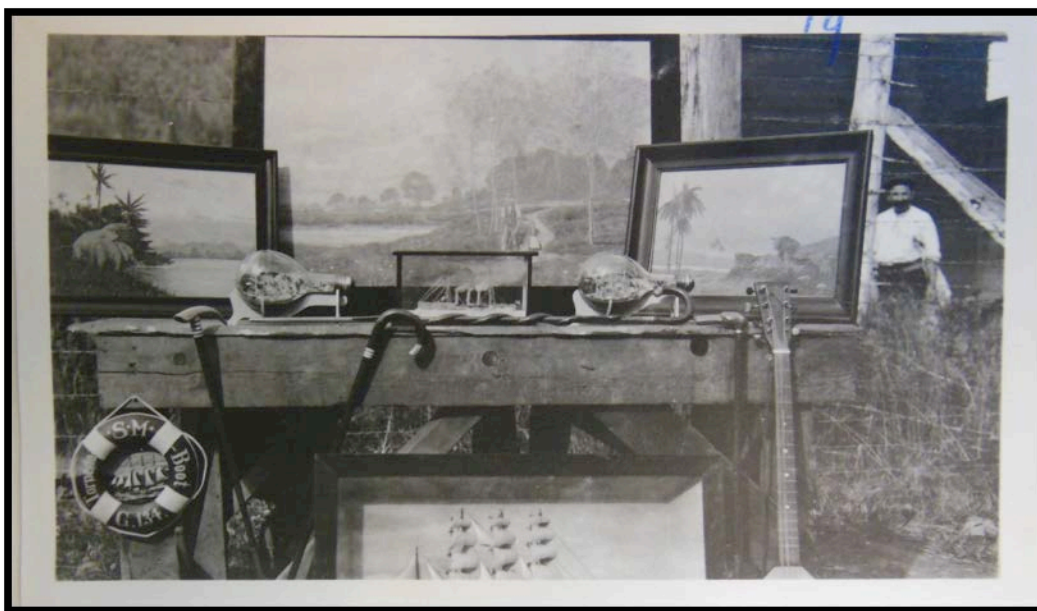
Prisoners amuse themselves during idle hours by carving and model making, a good number being very adept at this work. Walking sticks, models of vessels, generally constructed in the inside of a bottle, being the principal articles turned out. Some were employed at making clothes chests, doing photographic work etc. [LAC, RG18, vol. 1769, part 53].





**Figure 6.10. Ship in a bottle made by a civilian PoW for an individual's great-great grandfather whose homestead was near Morrissey, Private collection, Fernie, B.C.**

Note: Author's photograph July 2014)



**Figure 6.11. Items made by the civilian PoW's to pass the time. Note the ships in the light bulbs**

Note: 1915-1918, DSCN 8066m LAC File R112 1966-088, NPC Box 03390, reproduced with permission

## 6.11. Summary

The local communities surrounding Morrissey were clearly conflicted by the initial arrests of the internees. Although some mineworkers went on strike and refused to work with the enemy aliens, this had more to do with the poor economy and lack of jobs than with scapegoating. This was an excuse for their agenda to give jobs back to the naturalized citizens in the community. However, the Fernie mayor, the owner of the mines and many others did not support the internment and openly spoke out in favor of the internees. As the war progressed, newspaper reporting on the war front changed local mindsets and fear and resentment of the enemy spread. Consequently, resentment of the enemy alien at the local and national level provided the guards and camp police carte blanche to mistreat and outright abuse the PoW's with not only bullying but also physical violence. Consul Gintzburger even noted in one letter that basic food necessities provided to prisoners in criminal institutions was of higher standard than what the PoW's received.

Until now, families were not known to live within the confines of the Morrissey internment camp, but German first-class PoW's were more likely to have their families live along side them. The description of the Morrissey Hotel, later renamed Big Building and Slav Compound, and the subsequent pictures are the first documents that provide insight into the living quarters of the PoW's that were quite obviously less hotel-like and more hostel-like in nature. Contemporary society infers from second hand sources that the PoW's were comfortably accommodated because they have a mental image that the Morrissey Hotel was equivalent to modern hotels. Labels are powerful and without archival documents to counter such perceptions, there is no balance to account for the discrepancy. As is common in prisoners of war camps or any institutional confinement for that matter, mental escape is a necessary antidote to barbed wire disease (Carr 2011; Casella 2007; Mytum 2011). Inmates created many types of wood carvings and others taught at the night school their fellow prisoners attended.

The description of the first- and second-class PoW clothing offers comprehension into the visible distinctions that were created to separate both groups once the camps became amalgamated. It also contributes further insight into the lives of those who were

forced to labour, and provided with practical work clothing, versus those who evidently did not. Labour was clearly coerced, initially by financial enticement in order to purchase the daily comforts that were not provided and then by physical coercion when this did not work.

There were many attempted and successful escapes that took place in Morrissey, the most notorious prevented when the forty-five foot escape tunnel was discovered under the Big Bulding. The descriptions of how PoW's were hunted, when attempting to escape, is also a very disturbing reminder of the slight regard given to the PoW's.

Today, the mystery of the unmarked PoW graves is finally solved and it has been determined that three of these, Tom Ruzich, Harry Smeryczanski and Mike Katalinick all passed away from tuberculosis. Without the archival photograph of Hermann Rellmann's tombstone, this grave would have remained anonymous most especially since his remains were exhumed and reinterred in Kitchener, Ontario with no archival evidence of the exhumation remaining in Fernie. The photographs of the bell tents also shed light on the various epidemics that swept through Morrissey and the subsequent quarantine required to try and contain them. Secret letters to the Swiss Consul from prisoners speak to the mistreatment of PoWs who became extremely ill after being beaten by the camp police and may possibly have died. Additionally, there is a sharp contrast in the treatment of respected guards who passed away as noted with the eulogy written for the soldier and bugler, William Edwards. Unlike the PoWs, the guards were buried in St. Margaret's cemetery in Fernie. However, a disturbing comparison between Private Frederick Halliday, who committed suicide and clearly fell out of favour with his comrades, and the PoWs should be noted, with the subsequent investigation offering insight into how the PoWs remains may also have been treated at the time of interment.



## **Chapter 7.**

### **Oral History Interviews**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

Canadian Internment Operations has passed from living memory. Only the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the internees, guards, and local community members continue to recount the stories. Common threads formed the basis for the following themes: internee freedom; internee relationships with the community; treatment of internees; arrest themes; repercussion to the descendants of the PoW's; concealment of internment; shame and embarrassment; funds owing to internees; moving forward and finally, contributing to erasure.

Using oral testimonies from the descendant community is a complex issue in which one may question the validity of memory passed down generationally and not taken directly from those who experienced the event in question. Marianne Hirsch discusses communicative and cultural memories, in which communicative memory is biographical in nature, directly experienced by an individual and passed on to their descendants. Once the individual enters old age, there becomes a pressing need to institutionalize these memories into books, traditional archives, ritual commemoration or performance entering it into the realm of cultural memory. The communicative memory encompasses the individual and the family group while the cultural memory becomes the collective memory and comprises not only cultural and archival memory but also national and political memories (Hirsch 2012). Memory of traumatic events passed down generationally through family members is particularly pertinent since families rarely edit themselves in the comfort of the familial setting in the same manner in which one would if speaking out in social or public forums (Hirsch 2012). In addition, non-verbal and non-cognitive forms of language that directly relate to the traumatic events can appear

symptomatically: nightmares, illness, depression, pain and dissociation. These forms most often take place in the familial space – passing on the embodied form of memory transfer to the subsequent generations who then become directly affected in their own rights by the traumatic events (Hoffmann 2004).

It is important to note that the issue lies not with the memory itself but with the varying stakeholder communities and their differing agendas in which the desired outcome affects the transmission of oral testimonies and more importantly what information is preserved, discarded or distorted. The stakeholder communities are comprised of the families, survivor groups, local communities and political factions (Moshenska 2010). At stake for the descendant community is the guardianship of a personal, familial and generational past (Hirsch 2012) while at a nationalistic/ political level, this past is continually changing to suit the particular needs of the present-day national and political climate that form the group or collective memories (Dampier 2005).

My interviews serendipitously revealed the chasm that nurtures varying perceptions of the Morrissey Internment Camp. Residents in the local community and surrounding areas did not preserve the memory that Morrissey held an internment camp, and often those who were aware felt that the internees were treated fairly and had a significant amount of freedom. This information frequently came from book excerpts or newspaper articles that mingled with historical gossip shared by friends and family members. However, a common truism is that history is written by the winner and therefore the marginalized voice remains unheard (Angrosino 2008) and by listening carefully to the interviews, conflicting evidence was noted. However, ethnographic data is a key factor in historical archaeology and living testimony of those who experienced events, or whose families experienced such traumatic events, are key informants adding detail to my research.

## **7.2. Internee Freedom**

Many in the contemporary local community stated that the internees had the freedom to come and go as they pleased. An elderly gentlemen, whose father had been an internee in Fernie noted:

From what I heard, they (the WWI PoW's) had freedom. There was a Fernie-Morrissey railroad and I've read in books, somewhere, you know, how they would come in on weekends, and it would be no different than the Japanese that were interned at Cedar Valley. On Saturday evenings, me and my sister would stand out front and we were scared, holding back because here come the bunch (Japanese internees) and there would be guards with them and they would come into town and get what they want and they would go back, they worked in the bush, in the sawmill and that [Interview, 18 July, 2014, Elderly, Ukrainian-Canadian gentleman and Fernie PoW descendant].

Memory is a fickle guide when no one has first-hand experience—hence, the comparison with the WWI and WWII internment camps. Another individual whose father was part of the camp police noted that the internees often helped on his grandmother's homestead and she would compensate them by providing meals. During various times, internees worked outside of the camp, either voluntarily or under duress. Food was sparse and perhaps the opportunity to receive a better meal and speak to friendly individuals in the local community would have been enough to entice an internee out of the camp for the day.

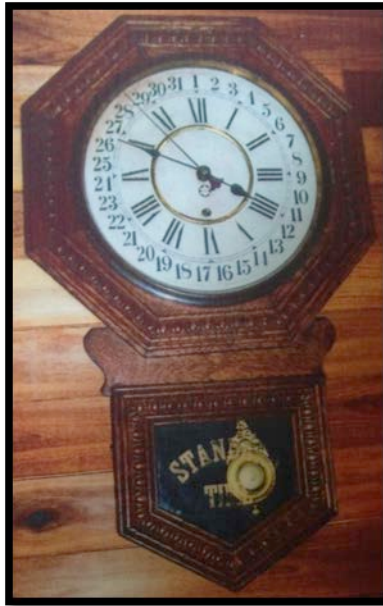
A lot of the people (PoW's) would come up here to help cut hay or something and then they were all fed up here. They would come up here to help and get away from the barbed wire I would imagine [Interview, 18 July, 2014, gentleman whose family lived in Morrissey and Uncle was part of the camp police].

Although archival evidence clearly indicates that individuals who tried to escape were shot at, one interviewee recounts his father's childhood memories of the internees and their freedom.

My dad said that one day he saw the prisoners just walking around freely. He said the guns the guards had he didn't even think they'd shoot. I don't know if they (guns) were old or what, I don't know, but it doesn't sound to me like it was much of a prison [Interview, 18 July 2014, gentleman whose great uncle was a Morrissey guard and raised his father in Morrissey].

### 7.3. Internee Relationship with the Community

Many of the internees had been friends and co-workers with local citizens before their arrest. A recurring anecdote within the local community around Fernie and Morrissey, was the generous gift-giving from the civilian internees. Often these gifts came in the form of beautifully hand-crafted woodwork. These actions challenge the assumption that hostility consumed the community.



**Figure 7.1. Clock made by a civilian PoW, private collection, Fernie, B.C.**

Note:. Author's photograph, July 2014

A family who resided in the Morrissey community showed me a family heirloom, which was the clock an inmate, made for his father. The intricate work and meticulous detail reveal a careful craftsman [Interview, 18 July, 2014, Elderly gentlemen and Fernie community member].



**Figure 7.2. A horsehair necklace made by a civilian PoW and given to a fellow PoW, private collection, Port Alberni, B.C.**

Note: Author's Photograph, July 2014

## **7.4. Treatment of Internees**

Descendants of the PoWs made very clear that abuse took place in Morrissey as well as at other camps across Canada, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

They were very badly fed: fat and potatoes. No vegetable, fruit or milk and these were young men - a lot of them in their early twenties. They had to work very hard. Ten hours a day sometimes. I can't say that it was a nice kind camp. I would never think that [Interview, 5 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian woman, descendant of civilian PoW at Morrissey].

My father spent a lot of time in black holes for writing letters and inciting stop workages or being political [Interview, 5 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian woman, descendant of civilian PoW at Morrissey].

You know the guards had muskets and bayonets on them and some of them were extremely rude and treated these people extremely badly. Some of them were nice – this was a human thing [Interview, 5 July 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian woman, descendant of civilian PoW].

My grandfather would not talk about the treatment in the camp. My mother (a child born in the internment camp) would overhear things only when close friends came over. They would sit and discuss the camp. In those days kids didn't rule the house and the kids would go outside and play or go in the other room and so it was only things that my mother

overheard over the years. She said, if you didn't work they didn't provide you with heat for your barracks so of course you couldn't cook your meals. They would say, 'Go down to the lake and get me the pail of water' and once you brought the water back the guard would kick it over and send you for another pail. This was common punishment from the army guards if you weren't being respectful enough or didn't do something they told you to do [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian gentleman, descendant of three generations of civilian PoW's].

My dad was a kid (12 years old) when he lived in Morrissey. He was taken in by his sister and her husband, who was a guard there, after his mom died. One day his rabbits got loose in the internment camp garden and the military court martialled (sic) my dad. It was probably just to teach the kid a lesson I'm thinking because he wasn't in the military. So, probably just to scare him into keeping his rabbits in, they held a court martial, otherwise I can't even think of why they would do this to a kid [Interview, 18 July 2014, gentleman whose great uncle was a Morrissey guard and raised his father in Morrissey].

Considering that a court martial was a military tribunal for a 12 year boy, a child who was clearly not an enemy alien, the treatment and punishment of enemy aliens was likely worse.

## **7.5. Arrest Themes**

A common thread amongst many of the internees who were arrested was that they were single or had very little family in Canada, were unemployed or working as laborers, and were passing through or living in the cities. Those who managed to stay off of the beaten path on farms or homesteads were more likely to escape notice.

My dad had two brothers; one was on a farm and never arrested nor was the other brother that was working in the copper mine. They were not arrested. The government wasn't even selective. It's just whomever these guys walked up to and if they found out because they all had to have registration papers as soon as the war broke out and if it said that they came from Austro-Hungary, and if these men were not working, and if they were single they arrested them right away. That's what happened to my dad, he was 21 and they arrested him in Vancouver [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, PoW descendant].

He was farming about two miles away from the village of Chipman. During the winter months he went away working on the railroad to make

money. When he came back in the springtime he was arrested. He came back from the railroad work camp and was arrested in Chipman. He had two children of his own and was living with my father and my grandfather before he passed away. He was sent to Cave and Basin and then transferred to Jasper to build a campsite and then they started building the Jasper National park. He was on slave labor because they were building the roadways in Jasper...He had younger brothers but they were never arrested. They were farming on their own, they had homesteads in the area. My uncle was arrested because he was a laborer taking jobs away from the Anglo-saxon world. A homesteader was one thing but he was out there working and they suspected that he was out there travelling and as a foreigner - he couldn't be trusted [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, PoW descendant].

## **7.6. Repercussion to Second-Generation Internees**

The internment operations not only affected the internees but also negatively affected their children – the second generation. Anger and resentment of imprisonment sometimes reflected in moods projected onto children. In addition, diseases that afflicted internees such as tuberculosis were not cured once freedom struck. Those afflicted with TB spent years in sanatoria away from family and children in an effort to be cured. Even so, many died leaving their children orphaned at a young age.

My father himself was sort of bitter and angry after the internment and my brother got some of that as it enters your psyche. He idolized our father [Interview, 5 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, PoW descendant].

My great-grand father, great-grand mother and grandmother were arrested and taken to Spirit Lake camp. They arrived in the winter in the middle of a tuberculosis epidemic. My great-grandmother died of tuberculosis, my grandmother died of tuberculosis at the age of 32, and my mother who was born in the camp in December 1915 also developed tuberculosis. Right after I was born when we were living in St. Paul, Alberta she got sent to Edmonton General Hospital for over two years so my dad looked after three of us all under six years of age. And then my sister developed tuberculosis when she was in grade 10. So, when I started school I was on a milk program and every morning they brought in a pint of milk and every morning my teacher gave me a cod liver oil pill. Apparently, just going by the dates, I was maybe a year old when my mom left for the hospital so she had tuberculosis when she was pregnant with me [Interview, 7 July, 2014, descendant of three generations of PoW's].

Mycobacterium tuberculosis (TB) bacilli is transmitted from one person to another via airborne droplets inhaled during coughing, sneezing or speaking. Historically M. Bovis, the bovine form of TB transmittable to humans, was associated with the ingestion of infected cow's milk or other cattle products, as well as swine products (McCuaig 1999). The initial infection may be asymptomatic and the clinical disease may take weeks or years to develop in individuals whose immune systems are unable to contain the focus of infection. While TB of the lungs is the most common cause of TB deaths, TB does infect other organs in the body. The social factors affecting TB infection are inadequate housing, poor light and ventilation, overcrowding and malnutrition. The symptoms of TB of the lung are coughing with sputum or blood, chest pain, weakness, fever and night sweats (World Health Organization 2015). The death rate in the early 1900's was 200 deaths per 100,000 individuals, however, the death rate in some First Nations communities was often ten times higher (Canadian Human Rights Commission). Tuberculosis today remains a serious causative factor among the poor, needy, and institutionalized (World Health Organization 2015).

During WWI, 51, 678 Canadian soldiers were killed in action or later died from their wounds; during this period a similar number of Canadian citizens died from TB. These statistics demonstrate the prevalence of TB at the turn of the century. Similar to the treatment given to low income Canadians of the early 1900's, PoW's were given substandard treatment when diagnosed with TB. Canadian soldiers who developed TB were cared for in military hospitals at a cost of \$1200-1300 per year and were also provided with a disability salary during their illness and recovery. The average annual wage of a production worker during the same period was \$375 per annum, office or supervisory employees earned \$875 per year and women earned half the salary of their male counterparts (Canadian Human Rights Commission 2015). Consequently, low income earners afflicted with TB and too weak to work were left to suffer on their own, fight off the infection or die in the confines of their own homes – risking further spread and infection of TB amongst family members while the wealthy class could afford the rest and open air of the early sanatoria (McCuaig 1999). TB in institutional settings, such as the interment camps, were breeding grounds for TB because of the overcrowded nature of the internment quarters, poor ventilation and heating, inadequate food supplies and poor nutrition.



## **7.7. Concealment of Internment: Anger, Shame and Embarrassment**

Internees dealt with the trauma of internment in several ways. Many were angry and resentful of the Canadian government after their release. There were those who were ashamed of their arrests and refused to speak about the ordeal once it was over. And others, feared that they may be arrested again and refused to speak about it in fear of gaining attention.

When they were leaving Spirit Lake, the government said, "If any of you want to stay here, there is land available, you can farm here." Apparently, their reply at Spirit Lake, they took everything that the government had given them, pots, pans everything and lit a big bon fire and burnt everything. That is what they thought of the government's offer after they had come from the Ukraine, came here and got thrown in a concentration camp and then were told the doors open, they were free to leave [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, descendant of 3 generations of PoW's].

When I asked my mom where she was born, she replied, "I was born in a little village just outside of Montreal". So of course, being a nice guy of Kincaid, I could see this nice little village. There was snow on the roof, there were yellow windows and smoke coming out the chimney and then I find out that she was born in a concentration camp in a tar paper shack in the middle of no where. I like my idea better. I could always see this nice little house with snow [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, descendant of 3 generations of PoW's].

My father said that my uncle had funds owing to him but he said, "no don't talk about it", he wanted to forget it and he would not apply for these funds. That would have opened it all up to his children that he had been a prisoner of war and he did not want to do that. He also lost a pocket watch that was taken away and never given back [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, descendant of PoW].

## **7.8. Funds Owing to Internees**

Many of the internees were property owners and had bank accounts when they were arrested. Whether their properties were ever returned to them after their release is unclear. In addition, many had personal items removed from them upon arrest and many of those personal items were never returned. PoW's were paid 55 cents per day for their

labour of which 30 cents was immediately deducted to pay for their upkeep. Of the remaining 25 cents, they were given half up front to spend in the canteen or on other personal items and the other half was to be returned to them after the war and their subsequent release. However, this never happened.

The last camp was Kapuskasing and it closed in June of 1920. My dad was let go in January of 1920. When they got out of the camp they were supposed to get 25 cents a day for having worked and he got nothing. They sent him out like a dog. He had been in prison for five years and he came out with nothing. And now I think, January in northern Ontario with no money, and he road the rails. I wondered what he had for money. There is no indication that he got any money on his release paper. That was cruel. [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian woman, descendant of civilian PoW].

In 1929, the government sent out a notice in the newspapers advertising for the PoW's to retrieve their monies. Why some never claimed their money is not known and perhaps their lack of English meant they could not read newspapers and those who could feared that this was a trap and did not want to be re-arrested. In addition, and similar to the interview above, the individual did not want his children to learn the true reason that he had been missing for so long.

Consequently, in 2008, an endowment fund of \$10 million was created by the Federal Government and negotiated for by the Ukrainian Community. The fund created was the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund (CFWWIRF), which was to raise awareness and educate Canadians with regards to the WWI Internment operations. However, descendants of the civilian PoW's note that the Federal government did not acknowledge that these funds came from the monies owed to the internees after their release.

For us the descendants we feel that it has not been resolved. We have not gotten the reconciliation we wanted. We wanted the government to admit that the \$10 million came from the money that was never paid to the prisoners. For us it's not finished. But we don't know what to do. This \$10 million comes from the money that was offered to the PoW's in 1929 that grew and did stay in a fund because most of the people hadn't heard about this and never did request or if some of them just wanted to get away from it and never hear about it again because of the time that they had spent in prison. I don't think that my father ever heard of this money [Interview, 5 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian civilian PoW descendant].

## 7.9. Moving Forward

Despite the passage of time, there is still much unease about the historical treatment of people who live outside mainstream Canadian society. People remember how easily civil liberties can be suspended by the federal government.

I want the people of Canada to know what happened because I am hoping that it will never happen again. The government can do the War Measures Act anytime. Trudeau did it and depending on today's government they could even do it against the current Muslims of Canada [Interview, 5 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, PoW descendant].

One of the first things we wanted to do was put this information into the education system in Alberta. In 2005, we started putting it into the social studies curriculum and in 2008 we had it confirmed and they starting teaching it in the social studies classes and then Ontario wanted a similar program and Quebec wanted a similar program and it began taking off [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, PoW descendant].

## 7.10. Contributing to Erasure

There are many layers as to why this history has been concealed for so long. As noted above, many of the internees, for various reasons, refused to speak about the ordeal once it was over. In addition, much of Europe had been destroyed by the war, erasing important historical documents in its wake. In Canada, for whatever reason, many of the cemetery markers in the Morrissey Cemetery are missing – only two remain and important historical documents at the local level have never surfaced.

There was an angel marker on the south side of the cemetery (Morrissey) just past the two Austrian graves. It was on stone but I think it was a cedar hand carved thing that these guys (Austro-Hungarians) made. It was quite big. I think someone stole it and removed it as a souvenir [Interview, 14 July, 2014, gentleman whose family homesteaded in Morrissey].

After the war my father sent letters back to our ancestry in the Ukraine. Things were not really ok after the war. Yes, they survived but the

battlefront went through their land three times. They lost a lot of cattle, they lost a lot of property and their church was a battlefield and the cemetery was semi-demolished and so you can't get information from that cemetery because the battle front went through there and destroyed a lot of the crosses. When I went back to the Ukraine ten or twelve years ago, I wanted to get information from the local area, the local people said 'Oh no, that's gone, that's gone' and we could not get any information about our ancestry [Interview, 7 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, PoW descendant].

According to local interviews, funeral home records of the Morrissey cemetery disappeared in the 1950s or 1960s. In and of itself, this does not mean anything, however, the death and burial records of the Vernon Internment camp also went missing around the same time.

The records from the first funeral home in our area are suspiciously missing. I have talked to someone who claims he examined them in the 1960's but between now and then someone appears to have 'misplaced' them [Lawrna Myers, personal communication, 18 October, 2014].

One informant told me of an incident he recalled:

Years ago a woman and her son went to clean a house out down on 6<sup>th</sup> avenue (Fernie). Originally it had belonged to the undertaker, all the records were there. Everything, she said they got a beautiful roll top desk and she took these books, everything was in there, the name, where they died, what they died of, and all of that. She said everything was there going back probably before 1900. I said, "What did you do with them?" She said, "I took them up to our museum." These books are no longer located in our Museum. [Interview, 14, July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian, PoW descendant].

## **7.11. Summary**

Many in the contemporary local community assume that the internees were free to come and go as they pleased. Interviewees discussed the internees who helped homestead their family plots and freely ate lunch with their families, often gifting them with hand carved woodwork. However, with the lack of food at the camp, proposing that perhaps the internees were happy to leave the confines of the barbed wire for a few hours, speak to a friendly face in the community and be recompensed with a fresh cooked meal is not difficult.

Descendants of the internees unanimously expressed the maltreatment that occurred in the camps. Sometimes it was overheard through whispered conversations between their parents and fellow internees. Others had outspoken parents, angry at their time in internment and who were extremely vocal about this part of their history. And sometimes, descendants held onto diaries, the personal written word of those who had directly experienced imprisonment, to bear witness to their internment.

The children of internees also suffered, some because they had also been interned, others had contracted tuberculosis from interned family members causing them to lose their parents to TB asylums for years on end. Consequently, many grew up malnourished due to not only the disease but also due to a single parent household. Sometimes fathers just disappeared when coming home from work one day leaving children fatherless until the end of the war when they were freed from the prison camps.

Funds owed to the internees for whatever reason were never returned. The true reason for this is unknown, but many descendant internees propose that the internees did not read the English newspapers where the advertisements were written, others did not want their families to know where they had been for all of those years. Many feared that the advertisement was a trap and feared re-arrest if they attempted to claim such monies.

Many layers of erasure pertaining to the Morrissey Camp lead to the changing perceptions I encountered. From the theft of PoW gravestone marker in the Morrissey cemetery, to the funeral home records pertaining to both the Vernon and Morrissey Internment Camps that each coincidentally disappeared in the 1950s or 1960s and to the families back in Europe whose lands were destroyed by the battlefronts, destroying churches and cemeteries where family histories were stored.

Of utmost importance to many of the descendant group is a necessity to create awareness and prevent this from happening again. These testimonies can be dismissed as hearsay, however, when corroborated with archaeological and archival evidence, they lend weight to the impressions held by descendant communities.

## **Chapter 8.**

### **Discussion**

Uncovering the history of the Morrissey Internment Camp and Cemetery was made possible by combining three lines of evidence that came from archival reports from the historical record, oral histories through interviews, and an examination of the material record. Together they offer insight into the four research objectives and offer some answers regarding the changing perceptions of the place over the past century.

Literature from 1914 indicates that two groups of PoWs, Germans and Austrians or Austro-Hungarians, formed the bulk of the inmates. The nebulous identity of the Austro-Hungarian cohort originates with the Austro-Hungarian Empire itself. An early research review determined that this included ethnic Croats, Poles, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Czechs, Bularians and Turks (Morton 1974). However, one researcher notes that there were in fact twenty-three ethnic groups within the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time of WWI: Croats, Poles, Turks, Hungarians, Austrians, Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Armenians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Serbs, Syrians, Italians, Lithuanians, Rusyns, Greeks, Jews, Slovenes, Ukrainians (Ruthenian), Germans (Frank Jankac, principal researcher for the Croatian Canadian Internment Project, personal communication, 8 November, 2014). However, for the purpose of this discussion, I will refer to the two groups as Germans and Austro-Hungarians.

For many in the local community of Fernie, Morrissey was very much out of sight out of mind. Although the initial mine workers were fellow citizens and friends prior to the onset of the war, a sense of othering took place that led directly to the imprisonment of their former neighbours. Having no direct contact with the internees meant that demonizing the other as enemy aliens became easier.

As camps began closing and the detainees were amalgamated within the same quarters, class distinctions began to cause friction between the two ethnic groups. First-class PoW's, most often Germans, were provided with better confinement quarters and food and were not forced to labour. Their better clothing as evidenced in photographs created a blatant visible divide as well. Other special privileges were allotted to the Germans as noted with the two PoW families who were permitted to live alongside and spend time within the internment camp quarters. Even in death, the evidence speaks to a cultural divide manifested by the impermanent wooden medium of the Austro-Hungarian grave markers stands in contrast to the permanent, ornately carved stone headstone of the Germans.

Rarely acknowledged is the effect that internment had on the intergenerational transfer of trauma within these families. Anger, resentment and fear affected many parent-child relations and consequently, the child rearing and nurturing of parents were also casualties of imprisonment. In addition, disease such as TB ravaged many households, leaving many children to their own devices while their parents were sent to TB sanatoria, sometimes leaving them orphaned.

The funds promised to each PoW for the labour they had performed in the camp never materialized at the end of the war. In 1929, the government put an advertisement in the newspapers notifying the internees to claim the monies owed to them. However, no one made claims for these funds. There was some mention among my informants of mistrust of government and fear of re-arrest that inhibited people from stepping forward. In my interviews, some opined that the former inmates thought the offer was a trap. Many did not want to remember this dark part of their past and more importantly did not want others to know where they had been for all of those years. Not surprisingly, fear, mistrust and anger appear to be common threads that occupied the minds of many of the internees after their release.

The prisoner-guard relationship became increasingly antagonistic as the war progressed. At the start of internment and under the supervision of Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Mackay, the camp ran with very little issue, as he was sympathetic to the plight of the PoWs (Norton 1998). One of the greatest contributing factors leading to

complaints of prisoner abuse was the forced labour. In addition, guards returning from the front lines were hardened by the war and once they began working in the internment camps, they projected their anger and resentment onto the so-called enemy aliens held there. However, two of my interviewees, one whose grandfather was a guard and the other whose uncle was part of the camp police were given gifts by the internees. Human nature, being what it is, the guards were not uniformly ruthless. As one of the descendants proposed, “people often change when they are given opportunities of power” (Interview, 5 July 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian woman, descendant). However, with such evidence of abuse that did take place at Morrissey, one must question the circumstances under which the “gift giving” took place. Is it possible that some were forced, coerced or blackmailed into sharing their artistic talents for the benefit of the camp guards and police? Or perhaps these items were traded for goods and contraband that were not permitted within the camp confines? It is difficult to make an inference based upon research at a single internment site, however, perhaps, after more archaeological investigations at other WWI internment sites have taken place, a pattern may develop that will allow the inference to become more sound.

One of the internee descendants’ reiterated her father’s description of the solitary confinement cells, labeling them the “black hole”. I was fortunate to undertake this interview prior to my archival search; otherwise, I may have missed this clue in the written record. In the Secretary of State and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Fonds, not only a description of the cells was noted, being 2 feet wide and 12 feet long with a swing down door for a bed, but also a description of how blankets were laid over the cells to dampen the sounds of the angry inmates. This would have also contributed to sensory deprivation leading to an understanding of why the internees would have labelled the confinement cells as the “black hole”.

Another internee descendant recalls her father describing the poor quality food, which consisted of only fat and potatoes with no vegetables, fruit or milk. She also noted that they were forced into hard labour with this poor, low caloric diet. Consul Gintzburger, in a Swiss Consul letter, recorded that the internees were provided with food of lesser quality than those served in criminal institutions and an initial literature review also addressed the poorly heated rooms in the Big House during the harsh winter



months, which led to the note verbal from Germany. These internees were also closely confined with three to four men in hostel rooms, as evidenced in the archives. Several of the archival reports and secret letters speak to the complaints of the prisoners ailing from tuberculosis, kidney and heart trouble along with general malaise and weaknesses. In addition, photographic evidence of the bell tents used to quarantine internees during the fever epidemic of 1915 may have also been used during other epidemics to prevent the spread of disease. Hence, malnutrition, physical exhaustion due to forced labour, physical abuse from guards, lack of warmth and close confinement may have all been contributing factors that led to the epidemics that ran rampant through Morrissey: fever epidemic 1915, la Grippe 1916, influenza epidemic 1918. These may also explain the additional unmarked graves in the Morrissey Cemetery, which include the three known Austro-Hungarian internee graves that died from TB. Lastly, insight into how the remains of the internees may have been treated upon death by the Morrissey military may be corroborated by the poor treatment and lack of respect given to Private Halliday's remains, who committed suicide and clearly lost the respect of his fellow guards.

I noted throughout this research process the various terms applied by different communities and time periods in reference of the camp and prisoners. As previously recorded, Morrissey began its operation as a "concentration camp" and was only relabeled an "internment camp" after WWII to avoid the stigma and comparison. The origin of the term "concentration camp" was derived from the civilian refugee camps founded by the British during the South African Boer War. In 1941, Joseph Goebbel appropriated the term in order to deflect criticism away from the German death camps and create parallels between the initial British camps and the German death camps (Stanley & Dampier 2010: 94). Canada was part of the British Empire during WWI and would have shared Britain's "concentration camp" label and designation. Today, those in the local community who speak of Morrissey and in the general public who reference the Canadian Internment operations as a whole, cringe at those who label the Canadian WWI camps as "concentration camps". However, many in the descendant internee community continue to refer to them specifically as "concentration camps". I consider the term appropriate for the Canadian WWI camps based on the original intent of the label and out of respect for the descendant internee community. It is interesting to note that this is similar to the Japanese American internment camps from WWII where the

Japanese internees and descendant community are adamant that the camps be referred to as “concentration camps” (Camp 2015).

In addition, and although the internees were initially labeled as enemy aliens and prisoners of war, this was done for political reasons in order to legally continue the labour camp operations under the umbrella of the 1907 Hague Convention that only applied to military PoW's. However, this also evolved over time to civilian prisoner of war and more currently internee. Today however, the descendant community continues to refer to their interned family members as prisoners of war and many refer to the labour camps as “slave labour”.

## **8.1. Changes in Perceptions Over the Past Century**

Of great importance to me personally when researching the Morrissey Internment Camp was to put names to the PoW numbers I gleaned from the archival documents and artifacts. Leaving these individuals nameless would allow this sterile history to remain unchanged and propagate the sense of othering that began one hundred years ago, and further entrench this historical amnesia. Through a tremendous amount of sleuthing, I was able to match many names with PoW numbers.

One of the questions motivating my research concerned the fluid perceptions of the Morrissey Internment Camp. This question gnawed at me from the first day I set foot in the Morrissey Cemetery. When I first landed at the Cranbrook airport, a mere 55 km west of Morrissey, I began asking the locals where Morrissey was located. To my surprise, very few people knew or had even heard of it. One individual noted that it was a great place to go off-roading and hunting.

Today, there is little trace of the town of Morrissey. Although surface artifacts remain, the forest canopy hides well the old town site. The cemetery is situated up an old logging road owned by the Jemi Fiber Corporation. Few visitors other than hunters, outdoor enthusiasts and loggers know of this town owned by Tembec. Both sites are on private property, requiring permission each time one sets foot on the premises.

An unassuming plaque with the “Morrissey Cemetary” sign announces the entrance to the cemetery and prevents damage during timber harvesting. However, it provides no hint that prisoners of war were laid to rest here. The town site itself has no signage or markers to reflect times reclaimed by the forest, enabling the curtains to remain drawn on this dark part of our nation’s history.

Erasure, both purposeful, with the destruction of documents, and unintentional, is the main reason that very little is known about this camp. Moving the internees outside of the town of Fernie and into the abandoned coal-mining town of Morrissey was a key factor in propagating social amnesia. By removing these prisoners from the landscape, both physically and mentally, Canadians were free to support the war effort. Fear stoked the dread of enemies that were neighbors, friends and coworkers before the war.

Reports note that upon the camp’s closure, it was immediately dismantled, leaving behind very little evidence of the structural foundations of the camp and the stories of those who had lived there during the three years it was open. Very few of the guards and prisoners spoke about the internment once the war was over (Norton 1998, Robertson 2005). There was an unspoken understanding that each side had done terrible things either on the battlefield or on the home front. There was such a strong fear of being re-arrested that many avoided joining citizens groups that might provide the government further information about them. Many wouldn’t even allow their children to join the Boy Scouts for this reason (Interview, 5 July, 2014, Ukrainian-Canadian civilian PoW descendant). There was continuous fear that if the government knew too much about you – you could be arrested again.

I was surprised to learn how few children knew about the internment of their parents or grandparents until one descendant explained that though their parents would sometimes reminisce with close acquaintances about their internment experience, children were not permitted to take part in adult conversation and consequently rarely heard the selective and few conversations that did take place.

Over time when stories are told in part, we are able to add our own experiences to the mix. For instance, several of the interviewees noted that they had heard stories of the internees visiting local farmers for lunch or dinner, hinting at their freedom to come

and go as they pleased. After a detailed archival research, I inferred that the internees were part of work parties that were paid by the farmers with a hot cooked meal in lieu of monies. Rumors and evolving tales hint at the choices available to the inmates. When looking at photographs of Morrissey, community members noticed an open gate that surrounded the Morrissey hotel and immediately concluded that the internees could come and go freely despite the armed guard clearly posted at the gate, holding a rifle with a bayonet. Very few pictures were preserved at the local community level and once I began retrieving more detailed photographs from Library and Archives Canada, I realized that there was barbed wire fencing around the immediate enclosure (Figures 8.1, 8.2a&b) and surrounding the entire camp with only one main entrance gate (Figure 8.3).

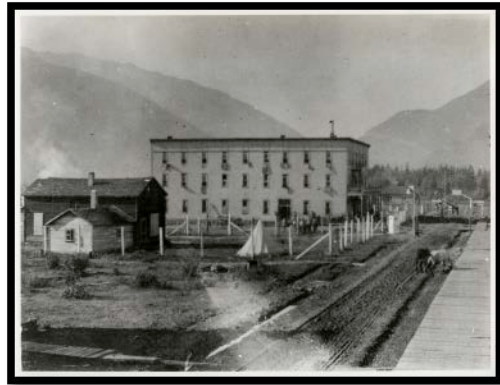


**Figure 8.1. A common misinterpretation within the local community is that the internees were free to come and go, as the open gate suggests. However, this picture is of a camp inspection and these internees were being guarded outside the hotel while the guards inspected their rooms.**

Note: Fernie Historical Society, 5322, reproduced with permission. Courtesy E. Hollinshead, photographer 1915)



(a)



(b)

**Figure 8.2. (a) Interior barbed wire fence surrounding the immediate confinement (b) further evidence of the barbed wire perimeter.**

Note: 3898do & 3882do, Fernie Historical Society, reproduced with permission. Courtesy E. Hollinshead, photographer 1915-1918



**Figure 8.3. The main entrance gate and only entrance to the camp**

Note: 5323-a, 1915-1916, Fernie Historical Society, reproduced with permission

The name of locations and buildings can often lead to different interpretations. The Morrissey internment camp took over an abandoned coal-mining town, which included all of its buildings. The initial Austro-Hungarians that were housed there lived in what was known as the Alexandria and Windsor hotels, which were initially built to be hotels for local workers. Today's equivalence would be a hostel. There were in fact up to

one hundred and fifty prisoners confined in the initial Hotel with 3-4 men sharing a ten by eleven foot room. There was no additional furniture provided other than the three to four requisite cots. However, when a building is labeled a hotel, one naturally envisages a location much warmer and fancier (Figures 8.4, 8.5).



**Figure 8.4.** Note the number of newly arrived prisoners entering the compound of the Morrissey hotel as noted in the photo caption, “200 PoW from Regina Sask. To Morrissey B.C.”. The left and front sides are also the single most common photographed views taken of the Morrissey hotel.

Note: 5321, 1915, Fernie Historical Society, reproduced with permission





**Figure 8.5. (Above photograph) a side view of the same Morrissey hotel offers a very different perspective of what the quarters were actually like**

Note: 1915-1918, LAC File R112 1966-088 NPC, Box 03390, DSCN 8051, reproduced with permission

Finally, the graves; today, there remains very little surface evidence to indicate that other graves exist contributing to this historical erasure. However, the GPR results determined that there are twenty more graves in the Morrissey cemetery. Without these results – evidence of what lies beneath – losing sight of those who passed away in the Morrissey Internment Camp is easy.

Of utmost importance to living survivors and descendant communities of traumatic events, is to understand why the trauma occurred and to educate others so as to avoid it happening again. This type of dialogue is often rife with emotion and the path chosen by the survivor, descendant and stakeholder communities is not necessarily amenable to all parties involved..

What caused the description of Morrissey to evolve from a concentration camp (1915), to internment camp (1950s), to a refuge for destitute foreigners during the Great War (2015)? I cannot offer a single answer but an amalgamation of several contributing factors: the physical ephemerality and the temporary nature of the Morrissey Internment

Camp, the purposeful erasure of the internment history from the Federal records, the deafening silence upon the camp's closure – on behalf of both internees and guards – in addition to the presentation of the sparse surviving documents, data and photographs by the various stakeholder communities, in ways that both purposely and inadvertently, furthered personal, local and political agendas.



## **Chapter 9.**

### **Conclusion**

#### **9.1. Directions for Future Work**

An exploratory excavation of the Morrissey Cemetery, sampling from the north and south ends would be a definitive way to determine whether the additional graves mentioned are in fact those of PoWs. It may also provide insight into the manner of death: natural causes, disease, malnutrition or foul play. Future fieldwork of the internment camp itself by way of survey, mapping, ground penetrating radar (GPR) and archaeological excavations would contribute to the historical record by shedding light onto the daily lives and differences within and between the prisoners and guards at Morrissey. The material remains will put greater focus on physical health through evidence of camp diet, prison economies as reflected in trade goods and contraband, acts of resistance and punishment as seen through vandalism and solitary confinement cells and finally, escapism. The latter does not only refer to actual physical escape but also mental escape by way of coping mechanisms such as arts and crafts, education, sports, drugs, alcohol and even suicide (Casella 2007; Myers and Moshenska 2011; Mytum 2012).

#### **9.2. Conclusion**

When I began research into the Morrissey Internment Cemetery, like many others, I had very little knowledge about Morrissey, or the other twenty-three internment camps that operated across Canada in WWI. The small, quiet cemetery that I set foot in for the first time in October of 2013, covered in brush and a light scattering of snow presented few clues of what lay ahead in my research. The four desolate graves, the

final resting place of unfortunate immigrants whose countries were at war with our own, only evidenced by their dilapidated picket fences. Although the historical and oral records are fragmented, and the cemetery almost completely concealed and forgotten, these four graves have remained – a faint beacon on the mountainside patiently waiting for renewed discovery and their story and the story of the unknown dead in the unmarked graves to finally be told.

It is of utmost importance to the descendant community that their story be told in an effort to prevent a historical reoccurrence. This thesis will be the third archaeological report pertaining to the Canadian internment operations, contributing a third line of evidence, the material culture record, to fill in the gaps in the oral and historical record.

Due to the contemporary nature of the work, historical archaeology can suffer political ramifications from the varying stakeholder communities that it affects. However, being the voice of the artifact is an archaeological privilege, a check and balance that can be applied to unearth those stories purposefully buried in an effort to erase or alter history.

Archaeology at the Morrissey Cemetery and Internment Camp contributes critical information that can also be carried out at other WWI internment camps across Canada. Future excavation of WWI internment sites in general will play a primary role in filling in the gaps where oral histories and the historical record are lacking, a consequence of erasure, and recount the historical record in all its original authenticity.

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