



Women and children interned at Spirit Lake, circa 1915, from Yuriy Luhovy's documentary *Freedom Had Price*.

Spirit Lake Centre marks 100th anniversary of internment camp

(UCC Montreal)—This year, Spirit Lake Internment Interpretative Centre at La Ferme, Quebec, 340 miles north of Montreal, is marking the 100th anniversary of the opening of Spirit Lake internment camp (1915-2015), the second largest of the 24 internment camps established across Canada during World War One during Canada's First National Internment Operations 1914-1920.

The significance of the 100th anniversary of Spirit Lake internment camp reaches far beyond northern Quebec. The unjust internment as "enemy aliens" at Spirit Lake affected the entire province of Quebec, especially Montreal, as well as the rest of Canada as internees were later transferred to other internment sites after the closing of Spirit Lake. Today, many descendants of former Spirit Lake internees live in various parts of Canada.

One of the first to mention the internment of Ukrainians at Spirit Lake was Casimir Johan Myrvitsky, in his article written in Ukrainian, titled "Memoir of a Pioneer", published in the 50th Anniversary Jubilee Book of St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Montreal, in which he wrote, "... World War One which started in 1914, Ukrainians remembered well, not only in Montreal, but all of Canada." He continues, "... our people suffered: many lost their jobs, others were taken to internment camps at Spirit Lake ...where our people worked as forced labor for .25 cents a day, clearing forests..."

Now in its fifth year of operation, Spirit Lake Internment Interpretative Centre (SLIIC) was estab-

lished on the original grounds of the internment site. With 20,000 visitors to date, a feature of the Spirit Lake Centre is their outstanding outreach educational program, which has now developed partnerships with Quebec school boards in Amos and surrounding area, as well as with school boards in Ontario. Group visits for students and teachers are booked well in advance with Spirit Lake, with workshops conducted at The Centre. Volunteers from The Centre also go out to high schools and have workshops in school auditoriums. Since this school year began in September 2014, 1,300 students have visited the Centre.

On March 29, a gala ceremony will take place in which Spirit Lake volunteer board members, with James Slobodian as board chairperson, will be presented with another award, this one from the English Association of Quebec "Neighbors", in recognition of the Centre's furthering awareness of Quebec's heritage and ensuring the telling of the internment story and history of Quebec is passed on to future generations.

Spirit Lake Internment Interpretative Centre's museum, open all year to visitors with guided tours in French, English or Ukrainian, was established with the help of a major grant released in installments over five years, from Canada's First National Internment Recognition Fund established by the Federal Government within the Taras Shevchenko Foundation as well as support from Caisse populaire Desjardins Ukrainienne de Montréal and others. A series of commemorative events will take place throughout the year.