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Spirit Lake Internment Interpretive Centre officially opened

(CFWWIRF/UCCLA/Office of Peter Goldring)—Nov. 24 marked the official opening of the Camp Spirit Lake Corporation Internment Interpretive Centre in La Ferme, near Amos, Quebec. Spirit Lake was one of the 24 internment camps that were established in Canada during the First World War. The Spirit Lake internment site was the second largest site in Canada, in which up to 1,312 men, women, and children were unjustly interned as enemy aliens. The majority of those interned at this site were of Ukrainian descent, of which 60 families were taken from Montreal's St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church. The other affected communities included Germans, Poles, Bulgarians, Croats, Turks, Serbians, Hungarians and Romanians. The historical materials collected in this centre document the experiences of entire families, who found themselves confined within a barbed wire fence.

The Interpretive Centre has been over 12 years in the making. Within the last four years, the project has made remarkable headway, spearheaded by James Slobodian of Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec. In 2007, the Corporation, with the co-operation of church authorities, bought the La Ferme Church in order to establish the historic Centre. Since

1999, archeological excavations have been taking place on the former site of the Spirit Lake Internment Camp, which was built during the First World War, at the beginning of the colonization of the Abitibi region in Northern Quebec.

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

Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism was among 100 invited guests that attended the opening of the Interpretive Centre, which generated significant local, national and international media coverage. Kenney was accompanied by fellow Members of Parliament from the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship group, including James Bezan, Peter Goldring and Bernard Trotter.

Kenney stated: "Our Government was proud to establish the Canadian Historical Recognition Program which has sought to teach future generations of Canadians about the often forgotten aspects of our past that, while unsettling, are important to remember. I am pleased that this interpretation centre, funded in part by the Government of Canada, embraces this mission."

"No country has a perfect past," said Goldring in a media release. "We all know too well that mankind is itself imperfect. Many countries of the world today conceal or refuse to admit their historical misdeeds to their citizens. One central message today is that Canada not only faces up to its past, but contributed resources, as it has done here, so that past government wrongdoings are memorialized. That way future generations can see, learn and hopefully not repeat such tragedies."

Andrew Hladyshevsky Q.C., President of the Shevchenko Foundation and Vice-Chair of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund stated, "The Quebec Spirit Lake Internment Interpretation Centre will serve as a permanent memorial to those Ukrainians and other Europeans who were unjustly interned, not because of who they

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Христос Раждається!



Rizdvyana Zirka (Zvizda) with the Icon of the Mother of God and Jesus in the middle, by Toronto sculptor Oleh Lesiuk. It was originally created as a fundraiser for the Dzherelo Centre in Lviv two years ago.

Christ Is Born!



PHOTO — MARCO LEVYTSKY

Holodomor Remembered

The Kapella Kyrie Choir sing the responses during the Memorial Service for victims of the Holodomor at Edmonton's City Hall, Nov. 26. Behind them are representatives of youth and adult Ukrainian organizations in Edmonton who formed an honour guard. For more see page 11 of this issue.

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PHOTO – TARAS ZALUSKY

Left to Right: James Bezan, M.P. Selkirk-Interlake; Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism; Andrew Hladyshevsky, Q.C., Chair of the Shevchenko Foundation and Vice-Chair of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund; James Slobodian, President of Camp Spirit Lake Corporation and Bernard Trottier, M.P. Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Spirit Lake Internment Interpretive Centre officially opened

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were, but from where they came from. This project will make an outstanding contribution to the remembrance of the internment and will educate Canadians about this tragic page in Canada's history." He concluded his speech mainly spoken in French, with the singing of the moving "Vichnaya Pamyat" (Memory Eternal) in memory of those internees buried at the nearby Spirit Lake cemetery.

The chairman of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Roman Zakaluzny, said he was pleased to learn that the management of the Spirit Lake Camp Corporation is placing priority on now making the museum's exhibits bilingual, in response to concerns raised by the Minister and UCCLA's executive.

"James Slobodian assured me and other VIPs attending this event that nothing is more important to him than ensuring that this muse-

um's contents are available in both official languages of Canada," said Zakaluzny. "We are happy to receive this reassurance that soon the museum's exhibits will be accessible to all Canadians, regardless of whether they speak French or English." All of UCCLA's plaques are trilingual, Zakaluzny noted, regardless of where they are located in Canada.

A prayer service was given by Msgr. Gilles Lemay, Bishop of the Diocese of Amos along with Rev. Father Robert Lalonde, the last priest of the St-Viateur Church, which is now the Administration Centre that houses the Spirit Lake Camp Interpretation Centre. Also, joining them in this service was Rev. Theofan Heto of Kirkland Lake, Ont. representing Bishop Stephen Chmilar, of the Toronto Eparchy Ukrainian Catholic Church Eastern Canada; Rev. Volodymyr Kouchnir, Dean of the Montreal-Ottawa District of the Ukrain-

ian Orthodox Church of Canada, representing Bishop Andriy of the Eastern Eparchy; and Rev. Dr. Ihor Kutash of Montreal representing the Ukrainian National Federation of Canada on behalf of Taras Pidzamecky, National President.

This project is the largest grant approved and funded by the Endowment Council of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund.

CUPFG hosts Krutsky

(Office of MP Bernard Trottier)—Nov. 17 Bernard Trottier, Member of Parliament for Etobicoke – Lakeshore, was joined by parliamentary colleagues for a presentation by Roman Krutsky. Krutsky is President of the Kyiv City Memorial Society and Director of the Museum of Soviet Occupation of Ukraine. A lawyer specializing in state law, Krutsky is an internationally respected human rights advocate, researcher and leader in the national democratic movement in Ukraine. As a result of his activities, Krutsky has frequently been the target of government intimidation and harassment.

"Mr. Krutsky spoke of the worrying situation in Ukraine, where democratic institutions and the rule of law are at risk. He emphasized that the show trial and imprisonment of Yulia Tymoshenko is just one example of the lack of a proper legal and judicial system, and that hundreds of other people are routinely harassed in Ukraine, including academics and political activists", noted Trottier.

Trottier also stated that Krutsky spoke positively about Canadian involvement in the situation. "Mr. Krutsky thanked Canada for the strong role it has played. He indicated that statements made by Canadians in our Parliament do get noticed in Ukraine, and are important in shaping democratic outcomes. He encouraged Canada to engage its allies to bring multilateral pressure to bear on Ukraine's government in the near-term."

Finally, Trottier commented on Krutsky's view of Canada's past, and the potential for future, assistance in the election process. "With respect to the next Ukrainian elections, Mr. Krutsky stated that he would like Canada to continue its election monitoring efforts, as in past elections, by monitoring both during the campaign as well as the days leading up to and including Election Day."

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May the joy and beauty of
Christmas be with you always!
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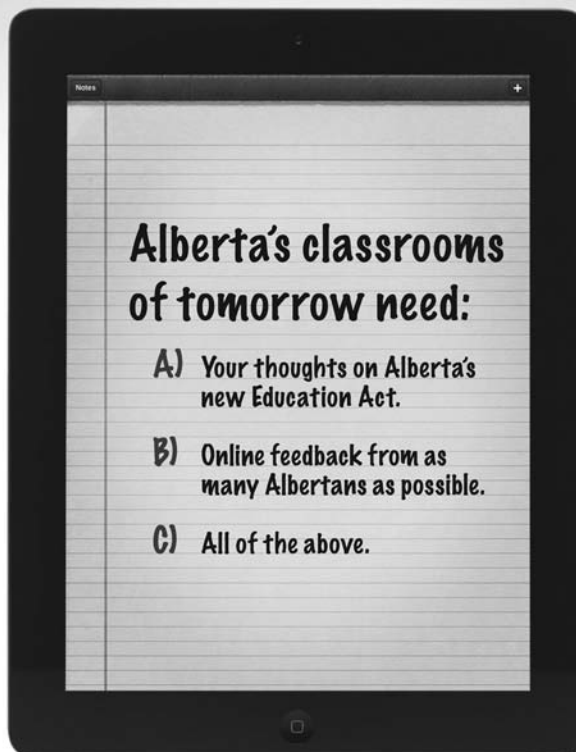
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