

CANADIAN INTERNMENT OPERATIONS, 1914- 1920

SYMPOSIUM AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

On 17-20 June 2010 the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund's Endowment Council sponsored a weekend-long symposium in Kingston, Ontario at Queen's University bringing together some 50 community activists, scholars, archivists, museum curators, internee descendants and artists to develop initiatives that will commemorate and educate all Canadians about what happened during Canada's first national internment operations of 1914-1920. It was only fitting that the symposium was held in "the Limestone City" where in 1978 the Ukrainian Canadian community's campaign for acknowledgement and redress began with an interview between former internee Nykola Sakaliuk and Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk, then a geography student at Queen's University.

The symposium schedule, facilitated by Gail Lord, revolved around four major



Draga Dragasevich laying wreath in memory of Serbian internees



Photo: Frank Janka

Endowment Council at Fort Henry

themes: A Crippling Legacy - The Affected Communities," moderated by Paul Grod, president, Ukrainian Canadian Congress; Repositories of Memory - The Curators, Custodians and Collectors," with comments by Mark O'Neill, chief executive officer of the Canadian War Museum; "Recovering Memory: Educating the Educators," guided by Dr. Ruth Sandwell of the Ontario Institute of Education, and "Reshaping Canada's Cultural Landscapes - The Creators" with Marsha Skrypuch, author and internee descendant. The keynote address was by Professor Roger Daniels, professor emeritus, University of Cincinnati, USA, "Bringing Governments to Justice."

The weekend-long symposium ended

with a memorial service at Fort Henry, Canada's first permanent internment camp, hosted by this UNESCO World Heritage site museum curator, Ron Ridley. Wreaths were laid by: Orest Kruhlak, chair of the Endowment Council; Andrew Hladyshvsky, president of The Shevchenko Foundation; and by diplomats representing a number of the homeland countries namely: Dr. Ihor Ostash, Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada; Ms Vesela Mrden Korac, Ambassador of Croatia to Canada; Tamas Kiraly, deputy head of Mission for the Embassy of the Republic of Hungary; and Mrs. Diane Dragasevich representing the Serbian Canadian community. An ecumenical prayer was read by Reverend Dr Stanford Lucyk following comments by the Hon-

ourable Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House of Commons. The memorial hymn, "Memory Eternal" concluded the commemoration.

The symposium's local organizer and Endowment Council member, Professor Lubomyr Luciuk, said: "This meeting represents the culmination of many years of effort on the part of many of those attending it. We hope the Kingston Symposium will lay the groundwork for helping the Endowment Council ensure that what happened to Ukrainians and other Europeans during this country's first national internment operations becomes part of the educational curricula of every province and is recalled through film, artwork and historical markers across Canada. Our fellow citizens need to become better aware of what the internees suffered - not because of anything they had done, but only because of who they were, where they came from. This violation of the civil liberties and human rights of thousands of innocents remains an historical episode in Canadian history that is scarce known. We are beginning the process of recovering this historical memory to help ensure that, in future periods of domestic or international crisis, no other ethnic, religious or racial minorities in Canada suffer needlessly as these "enemy aliens" of the First World War period did."

For more information on the CFWWIRF please go to www.internmentcanada.ca or phone toll free 1-866-288-7931.

Serbian Note:

All the internees arrived on Canada's shores carrying Austro-Hungarian passports. Among them were Serbs from Bosna, Hercegovina, Lika, Kordun, Dalmatia, area which were under Austro-Hungarian rule. An estimated 300 Serbs were rounded up and sent to the internment camp in Kapuskasing where they remained confined until 1919 when they were liberated by the Srpska Narodna Odbrana (Serbian National Shield Society) president, Boza Markovich. There is evidence in the roll call list of names of many more Serbs interned in western Canada and in camps throughout the country.

Much research and creative interpretation needs to be done on this tragic episode in our early Canadian history. See the Endowment Council web site for grant application details.