



Canada's first national internment operations, 1914-1920

Even though there was never any evidence of disloyalty on their part, thousands of Ukrainians and other Europeans, including Bulgarians, Croatians, Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Jews, Romanians, Russians, Serbians, Slovaks, Slovenes, among others were imprisoned needlessly and forced to do heavy labour in 24 internment camps located in the country's frontier hinterlands during Canada's first national internment operations. Tens of thousands of others, designated as "enemy aliens," were obliged to carry identity documents and report regularly to the police. Many were subjected to other state-sanctioned indignities, including disenfranchisement, restrictions on their freedom of speech, movement and association, deportation and the confiscation of what little wealth they had, some of which was never returned. This happened even though the British Foreign Office informed Ottawa that these eastern Europeans were "friendly aliens" who should be given "preferential treatment." These men, women and children suffered not because of anything they had done but only because of who they were, where they had come from.

"I was one of the thousands of Ukrainian Canadians rounded up as 'enemy aliens' and put in concentration camps between 1914-1920. I was just six years old then. I was born in Canada. I lived in Montreal with my parents, brother John and sisters, Anne and Nellie. Nellie was born in Quebec. She was just two and a half when we buried her near the Spirit Lake internment camp. Canada's Ukrainians were not disloyal. Our imprisonment was wrong. We were Canadians. Those who, like my parents, had come from Ukraine to Canada, came seeking freedom. They were invited here. They worked hard. They contributed to this country, with their blood, sweet and tears. A lot of the latter. 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."

Mary Manko Haskett, co-chair, National Redress Council, UCCLA, survivor of the Spirit Lake internment camp, January 1994



"We, the undersigned, Ukrainian and Austrian women, wish to bring before the notice of the women of Calgary and this province that our country was treated by the Austrian government 73 years ago as Belgium has been treated by the Germans. We came to this country to make Canada our future home. We are not spies. Thousands of our men are fighting under the British and Russian flags. We have been discharged from work because we are considered aliens, but we are loyal to Canada. What are we to do if we cannot get work? Are we to starve or are we to be driven (to) a life of vice? Will not the women of Calgary speak for us?"

Annie Berlin, Olga Kranoka, Mary Kaskin, Mary Zebrowka, Dinah Dobrizka, Mary Zech, Annie Crashiski, Mary Prolowsky, Mary Antonowsky, Mary Prochkin, Olga Diskin, Mary Broshka
29 February 1917, The Calgary Daily Herald



Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund

In consultation with the Ukrainian Canadian community's representatives the Government of Canada set up the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund (www.internmentcanada.ca) in 2008. An Endowment Council including several of the affected ethnocultural communities was established to support educational and commemorative initiatives that hallow the memory of the internees and remind all Canadians of the need to remain vigilant in defence of civil liberties and human rights in times of domestic and international crisis.

Canada's First National Internment Operations, 1914-1920



"It is very probable that if this proposal [War Time Elections Act, 1917] becomes law, the 'alleged' foreigners and hitherto 'naturalized' Canadians will bear their reproach meekly, but they will have sown in their hearts the seeds of a bitterness that can never be extirpated. The man whose honour has been mistrusted, and who has been singled out for national humiliation, will remember it and sooner or later it will have to be atoned for."

Canada's first national internment operations, 1914-1920

Location of Camp	Date of Opening	Date of Closing	Description
Montreal, Quebec	13 August 1914	30 November 1918	Immigration Hall
Kingston, Ontario	18 August 1914	3 November 1917	Fort Henry
Winnipeg, Manitoba	1 September 1914	29 July 1916	Fort Osborne Barracks & Fort Garry
Halifax, Nova Scotia	8 September 1914	3 October 1918	The Citadel
Vernon, British Columbia	18 September 1914	20 February 1920	Provincial Government Building
Nanaimo, British Columbia	20 September 1914	17 September 1915	Provincial Government Building
Brandon, Manitoba	22 September 1914	29 July 1916	Exhibition Building
Lethbridge, Alberta	30 September 1914	7 November 1916	Exhibition Building
Petawawa, Ontario	10 December 1914	8 May 1916	Militia Camp
Toronto, Ontario	14 December 1914	2 October 1916	Stanley Barracks
Kapuskasing, Ontario	14 December 1914	24 February 1920	Bunk Houses
Niagara Falls, Ontario	15 December 1914	31 August 1918	The Armoury
Beauport, Quebec	28 December 1914	22 June 1916	The Armoury
Spirit Lake, Quebec	13 January 1915	28 January 1917	Bunk Houses
Sault Ste Marie, Ontario	3 January 1915	29 January 1918	The Armoury
Amherst, Nova Scotia	17 April 1915	27 September 1919	Malleable Iron Works
Monashee-Mara Lake, British Columbia	2 June 1915	29 July 1917	Tents & Bunk Houses
Fernie-Morrissey, British Columbia	9 June 1915	21 October 1918	Rented Premises
Banff-Cave & Basin, and Castle Mountain, Alberta	14 July 1915	15 July 1917	Dominion Park Building Tents at Castle Mountain
Edgewood, British Columbia	19 August 1915	23 September 1916	Bunk Houses
Revelstoke-Field-Otter, British Columbia	6 September 1915	23 October 1916	Bunk Houses
Jasper, Alberta	8 February 1916	31 August 1916	Dominion Parks Buildings
Munson, Alberta-Eaton, Saskatchewan	13 October 1918	21 March 1919	Railway Cars
Valcartier, Quebec	24 April 1915	23 October 1915	Militia Camp

"Fear is the only agency that can be successfully employed to keep them within the law and I have no doubt that if the Dominion Government persists in the course that it is now adopting the foreign element here will soon be as gentle and easily controlled as a lot of sheep."

Sir Hugh Macdonald to the Honourable A Meighen, 3 July 1919

"The conditions here are very poor, so that we cannot go on much longer, we are not getting enough to eat—we are hungry as dogs."

Letter from Nick Olinyk, #98, Castle Mountain, Alberta, to his wife



"My dear father: We havent nothing to eat and they do not want to give us no wood. My mother has to go four times to get something to eat. It is better with you, because we had everything to eat. This shack is no good, my mother is going down town every day and I have to go with her and I don't go to school at winter. It is cold in that shack. We your small children kiss your hands my dear father. Goodby my dear father. Come home right away."

Katie Domytryk, aged 9. Letter received by H Domytryk, internee #1100, arrested in Edmonton, March 1916, interned initially at Lethbridge, later transferred to Spirit Lake, father of four.

"The prisoners in Canadian Internment Camps came to the Dominion as peaceful emigrants and the great majority of them at least have been good, law-abiding residents since their arrival, doing their bit to further the development of its great resources. In other words, these men now held as prisoners, as a class, are good, sturdy, inoffensive men, able and willing to work, most of them desirous of becoming Canadian citizens. The idea, therefore, of a treatment of such men as quasi-criminals seems contrary to the very best interests of the Dominion,

and the temporary saving, which may be effected by the payment, or rather allowance, of such pittance as 25 cents per day for a full day's work, not even payable to them or to their families in full, seems to be as inexpedient as unjust, the former because men will not render a day's work for that amount, even when pretending to do so; unjust because most of these men had good profitable work prior to their internment and families to support which are now punished more than they are. There is no doubt in my mind, that at the present moment, the great

majority of the prisoners at Spirit Lake could safely be returned to their homes and families, and that such return would be more profitable to Canada in the end than their retention in the camps as unwilling workers or strikers."

American Consul G Willrich to the Honourable Secretary of State, Washington, 29 December 1916

"I say unhesitatingly that every enemy alien who was interned during the war is today just as much an enemy as he was during the war, and I demand of this Government that each and every alien in this dominion should be deported at the earliest opportunity....Cattle ships are good enough for them."

Herbert S Clements, MP (Kent West, Ontario), 24 March 1919



For more information go to

www.internmentcanada.ca

or contact

Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund

202-952 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2W 3P4

1-866-288-7931