

War Memories across Canada Conversation Kit:

First World War Internment Banff and Castle Mountain, Alberta; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



Glenbow Archives - Archives du musée Glenbow
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During the First World War, Canada was part of the British Empire and fought with Britain against Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. These four countries were known as the Central Powers. The Canadian government considered recent immigrants from these enemy nations to be a threat to Canada. This means that many people who had recently moved to Canada were considered enemies. Although they had never committed a crime, more than 8,500 of these “enemy aliens” were imprisoned in 24 different internment camps across Canada. In the camps, the internees did hard labour in very poor living conditions away from their homes, friends, and often their families.

One of these camps was the camp near Banff, Alberta. It operated from 1915 to 1917 and held mostly Ukrainian men. Another camp was the Eaton Internment Camp in Saskatoon with 65 Ukrainian and German prisoners, who moved there in 1918 from a camp in Alberta because of the influenza epidemic. The Eaton internees provided labour for the railway. Many Canadians don’t know that parts of the Banff National Park were built using the labour of First World War internees.

Discussion Questions:

Although most Canadian internees were men, there were also some women and children in internment camps. They were often there voluntarily, which means they chose to go. Why do you think these women chose to go to the camps with their children?

Many of the men who were interned never spoke of their experiences until their old age. Why do you think this is?

Many people don’t know that internment camps existed in Canada during the First World War. Were you surprised to learn about the internment camps in Canada? Why or why not?

Do the stories of First World War internment camps still matter a century later? Why or why not? What can we learn from this episode in Canadian history that can be applied today?

Activities:

This [map](#) shows the internment camps in Canada during the First World War. On the map find an internment camp close to your home. Write a short profile of the camp. Include dates of operation, who was imprisoned there and what is on the site now. Is there a monument on the site that you can visit? What was the impact of the camp on the neighbouring communities?

In August 2014, [100 plaques were unveiled across Canada](#) as a tribute to the people interned in Canada during the First World War. Many are in locations significant to the Ukrainian community. Is there a [plaque in your community](#)? If possible, visit a plaque location. What is the significance of this location in the internment story?

Resources:

Websites

Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund

<http://internmentcanada.ca/>

Includes an extensive [resource list](#).

Enemy Aliens, Prisoners of War: Canada's First World War Internment Operations, 1914-1920

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/ab/banff/natcul/histoire-history/internement-internment.aspx#banff>

This Parks Canada webpage focuses on the story of the Banff internment camp (1915 – 1917). Available in [French](#).

Pivotal Voices - Ukrainians in Canada

<https://tc2.ca/teaching-resources/online-resource-collections/special-collections/pivotal-voices.php>

A comprehensive listing of teaching resources about Ukrainian immigration to Canada and First World War internment.

The Saskatchewan Railway Museum

<http://saskrailmuseum.org/index.php/our-collection/eaton-memorial/>

This site describes the Eaton Memorial on the site of the Saskatchewan Railway Museum near Saskatoon.

Videos

Freedom had a price: Canada's first national internment operation, directed by Yuriy Luhovy. National Film Board of Canada, 1994.

https://www.nfb.ca/film/freedom_had_a_price/

Jajo's Secret, by James Motluk. Guerrilla Films, 2009.

La Fuite, by Robert Cornellier. Macumba, 1995.



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Books

In fear of the barbed wire fence: Canada's first national internment operations and the Ukrainian Canadians, 1914-1920, by Lubomyr Luciuk. Kashtan Press, 2001. [Available online](#).

Prisoners of prejudice : Canada's first national internment operations, by Douglas Davis. Edmonton Public Schools (2011)

An easy-to-understand resource originally created as a teachers' guide.

Silver threads, by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch. Viking, 1996.

A novel for children about Ukrainian internment. The author has also published Prisoners in the promised land & Dance of the banished.

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