

UCCLA- Internment Survivor Found Born in Captivity: Survivor of Canadian Internment Operations Found For Immediate Release (Ottawa, Thursday, 29 November 2007)

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On Monday, 26 November 2007, the CBC Radio One program The Current aired a major segment on the Ukrainian Canadian community's ongoing calls for official recognition of what happened and for the restitution of the internee's confiscated wealth.

In response Jerry Bayrak, of Edmonton, Alberta, contacted the CBC and through them the chairman of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association (UCCLA), Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk, to reveal that his mother, Mary Hancharuk, was born at the Spirit Lake internment camp, 16 December 1915, and will soon be celebrating her 92nd birthday.

Commenting, Dr. Luciuk said: " We were both astonished and delighted to learn that a survivor of Canada's first national internment operations remains with us. We can confirm that Mary's father, Nikolaj, was arrested and that he and his family were subsequently held at the Spirit Lake camp. That an actual survivor will join us for the signing of a Ukrainian Canadian redress and reconciliation settlement is an unexpected Christmas gift, for when Mary Manko died we mourned not only her passing but that the government would not have an actual internee present to witness this closure. Now that will happen because of a Canadian-born child, Mary Hancharuk, whose first years were spent in a Canadian concentration camp."

Negotiations toward securing a Ukrainian Canadian redress settlement began in Ottawa on 26 November 2007, thanks to MP Inky Mark's Bill C 331 – The Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act, which obliges the government to reach an agreement with designated organizations representing the Ukrainian Canadian community.

During Canada's first national internment operations of 1914-1920 thousands of Ukrainians and other Europeans were unjustly imprisoned as "enemy aliens" and forced to do heavy labour for the profit of their jailers, not because of anything they had done but only because of where they had come from.

Some women and children were held at Vernon, British Columbia, and Spirit Lake, Quebec (now La Ferme). The Montreal-born Mary Manko Haskett was six when she was transported into Quebec's Abitibi region with her family and interned at Spirit Lake. She died 14 July 2007, thought to be the last survivor