



## Cave and Basin internment exhibit moves ahead

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A new exhibit on the history of First World War internments in Canada will be built adjacent to the Cave and Basin National Historic Site.

The Parks Canada Advisory Development Board (ADB) approved plans for the First World War Internment Exhibit on Thursday (Jan. 27) without imposing any conditions or recommendations.

Although there have been public consultations on the project, the ADB meeting was the first opportunity to formally present the design to the public. The internment exhibit is part of a Parks Canada project to educate the public on the First World War internment camps across Canada. An interpretive wall will be built in Halifax detailing the internment experience in that area and Fort Henry, near Kingston, will have a larger exhibit specifically about the camps located there. There will also be an online component to the internment exhibits.

The Cave and Basin site will be the largest internment exhibit in Canada, displaying not only the details of the camp, but the larger picture of Canada during the First World War. "The role of this exhibit is to tell the national story from 1914-1920 and speak to all 24 camps that were established in those years," said Steve Malins, Parks Canada's project leader for the Cave and Basin renewal project and the internment exhibit.

The exhibit will be housed in a new building just outside of the Cave and Basin National Historic Site boundaries, near the former location of the internment camp. At only 100 square metres in size, the building design presented a challenge to Parks Canada consultants. Peter Schulz of Riddell Kurczaba designed the building, calling it a tremendous challenge to design something that had to be humble, subtle and respectful. "It's so different to focus on what has happened and then how do you express that in a building, that's the challenge," said Schulz. "It's a building of meaning. It's a building of memory, in a way.

"I hope that the solution we found is respectful to anyone involved in the history of this."

The building's slanted roof was specifically designed to evoke the look of the barracks that housed hundreds of men, primarily of Ukrainian descent, during the First World War. It will also include an inside window that offers a view of the site as part of the exhibit. The exit to the building will have an outside bench, offered as a contemplative area for people to reflect on the information after going through the exhibit.

"The building actually helps enhance the exhibit experience," said Malins.

Although there are no plans to direct visitors to explore the former internment site, Parks Canada also will not put up any barricades.

"When you put up a fence, you draw attention to a space as much as you're trying to protect it," said Malins. "We're not going to preclude people from going in there, but we're not going to draw attention to it either."

The internment exhibit, designed as a self-guided tour through the building, will only be open during the summer season, free of charge. Exterior interpretive elements, such as the bench area and signs, will still be seen in the winter.

The interior of the building will be primarily a visual exhibit, with some audio and video aspects, as well as 3D models of the barracks and bunk space. Parks Canada has been working closely with members of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund, which represents the different cultural groups affected by the internment policies of the Great War.

Malins said Parks Canada is very aware of the serious and emotional aspect of this important exhibit. "We're very conscious that this story might cause people concern. It'll be a surprise to some people that this even happened in Canada."