

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Columbus Centre launches its latest project commemorating the internment of Italian Canadians during World War II

A new travelling exhibit now onsite for a special preview before its Canada-wide three-year tour



December 7, 2012 Toronto, ON – On Thursday, December 6, 2012, Columbus Centre officially launched its new travelling exhibit, *Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Times: Italian Canadian Experiences During World War II*. Funded by the Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP), Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), this project follows the success of *Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of WWII* – a permanent exhibit, book (*Beyond Barbed Wire*), and website (www.ItalianCanadianww2.ca) – launched in May.

Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Times explores the experiences of Italian Canadians following Italy's entry into World War II on the side of Germany. Through video, audio, and text, the travelling exhibit puts a human face to this little-known period in Canadian history.

The public event, held in the Joseph D. Carrier Art Gallery, was attended by 120 guests. Among them were families of those interned and/or affected by the internment during this unsettling time in Canadian history, when Italian Canadians were viewed as "the enemy within."

The evening began with welcome remarks from Pal Di Iulio, President and CEO of Villa Charities Inc., and Karen Manarin, Chair of the Columbus Centre Board of Governors. Retired senator Consiglio Di Nino followed, describing his passion for the project and educating the audience on the traumatizing experiences many Italian Canadians endured during the internment period. Another special guest, Senator Linda Frum, then read remarks from both MP Julian Fantino, International Co-operation Minister, and MP Jason Kenney, Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister, who were regrettably unable to attend at the last minute.

Speaking on behalf of Minister Kenney, Senator Frum said, "It may be a natural instinct for societies, like individuals, to try to bury or forget dark moments in their past. But we must always remember historical events that are at odds with our values as a society. Projects such as the one we are launching this evening benefit us all by helping to better illuminate the past and to better guide our present-day actions."

Di Iulio ended the night's line-up by giving a special presentation to Di Nino and Senator Frum and highlighting project acknowledgements.

Amidst cocktails and conversations, guests viewed the exhibit in the main foyer of Columbus Centre. The travelling exhibit is divided into three sections of Home, Community, and Camps/Prison; the nostalgic 1940s look-and-feel is particularly felt in the kitchen scene. The stained wooden exhibit structures hark back to the wooden huts that housed the internees in their remote camps. Audio and video stations, complete with supplementary trilingual transcripts, feature some of the 87 original interviews collected. Full-scale display panels, featuring photos, documents, and miscellaneous objects, provided guests with a sample of the rich collection (1,300 records) archived by Columbus Centre. Guests were also invited to have a second look at the permanent exhibit in the upper Carrier Gallery.

The travelling exhibit tour begins in Ottawa in mid-January at the National Congress of Italian Canadians (National Capital District) at the Italian Canadian Historical Centre. For more info on the travelling exhibit tour dates/venues or on the project, please contact us at 416.789.7011, info@italiancanadianww2.ca, or www.ItalianCanadianww2.ca.



Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of WWII



@ItCanWWII



Italian Canadians WWII

- 30 -

* Photos available upon request

Media Contact:

Stefanie Polsinelli, Communications & Marketing Coordinator
Villa Charities / Columbus Centre
416.789.7011 ext. 320
spolsinelli@villacharities.com

Funded by: