Canadian Monuments to Central and Eastern European History: Dark Heritage and Multidirectional Memory

'Canadian Monument to Central and Eastern European History' investigates the cultural impact of the many Canadians claiming Central and Eastern European heritage – approximately 20% of the population. Numerous monuments across the nation document their immigration story, the history that led to their move to Canada and their contributions to their new communities. Our project examines the political messages these monuments project and the rationale for this form of canonization. Secondly, it provides a historical review of the settler histories underlying these artifacts, with special attention given to why and how each community ended up playing a larger or smaller role within Canada's national mythology. Thirdly, the collection explores these settler communities' relationships with Canada's Indigenous peoples, as these encounters still await thorough investigation and critical scrutiny. Over a three-year period, our project will produce three major outputs: A virtual exhibition of all monuments under investigation, a physical publication showcasing a representative selection, and a collection comprising essays and academic papers by all team members. These outputs will serve as a stepping stone for further research and as a tool to familiarize the general public with a significant but lesser-known aspect of Canadian history.

Our database currently features historical and statistical information on 134 Canadian Monuments to Central and Eastern European History, from the Holodomor memorials in Edmonton, Winnipeg, Calgary, Regina and Toronto to the historical Doukhobor sites in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. This collection is complemented by a second database of currently 287 pieces of relevant scholarly literature, archival materials and news items. The primary objective of our team is to present what will likely be more than 150 monuments in a virtual exhibition – a living learning repository that features (1) sufficient images of each artifact for art historical analyses; (2) the statistical data required for thorough historical and cultural investigations; (3) 500-1000 words of historical, political and cultural context for interested scholars and members of the general public; and (4) links to further resources, such as pamphlets from inaugural ceremonies, documents from the application process or a record of media controversies.

For the realization of this project, we have built two interconnected sets of alliances. The collection of empirical data and historical insights is a collaboration of colleagues from the Universities of British Columbia, Montréal, Central Florida, Toronto, Saskatchewan, from York University and from the Royal Military College of Canada, with additional support from community partners such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the Mennonite Heritage Archives and the Doukhobor Heritage Village. The theoretical framework, on the other hand, is provided by the University of Heidelberg's flagship initiative 'Culture Wars: Kämpfe ums kulturelle Erbe' [struggles for cultural heritage]. Led by research chairs in linguistics, political sciences and American Studies, this team has recently developed a new model to describe the 'darkening' of cultural heritage, i.e. the decrease of the perceived validity and facticity of commemorative artifacts and practices,

such as is the case with Canadian monuments to Hungarian, Mennonite or Doukhobor history. The first major milestone of this collaboration will come at the end of year 1, when the entire team will meet for a workshop in Vancouver to present preliminary results and to discuss the theoretical framework for all output activities. The second milestone is set for the end of year 2 when we will publish our virtual exhibition to the world wide web. By the end of year three, the project will conclude with the presentation of our two physical publications.

This project includes significant training for undergraduate and graduate students at Canadian universities. Undergraduate research assistants will contribute to the finalization of our two project databases and to the composition of the 500-1000-word texts accompanying each of the monuments in the virtual exhibition. These students will be hired, trained and mentored by the faculty team member specializing in the respective subject they are working on. The students will also receive support from graduate students hired at the University of British Columbia (UBC) who will be trained as copy-editors and project managers. At UBC, we will also hire graduate students with expertise in Indigenous Studies to research the encounters of settlers from Central and Eastern Europe with Canada's Indigenous Peoples, and we will hire student website managers who will receive training from specialized staff of the university library.