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Jewish Schools prepare for Classes amid COVID

By Maxine Fischbein

Following the Province's July 21 announcement that Alberta schools would resume classes this fall under a "near normal" scenario with additional health measures, administrators and staff at the province's four Jewish day schools are preparing for cautious reopening.

"It's a mixed bag of emotions," says Rabbi Chaim Greenwald, Head of School at Calgary's Halpern Akiva Academy. His sentiment is shared by colleagues at Calgary Jewish Academy (CJA) and at Edmonton's Menorah Academy and Talmud Torah School.

All say they and their teachers are excited to welcome students back to school. At the same time, our community's educators are tasked with the enormous responsibility of protecting kids during a global pandemic while attending to their academic, emotional, mental and social needs.

They do so as parents make some difficult choices. Are they ready to send their children back to school? And are they willing or able to afford the relatively high cost of Jewish education?

There is a decline in enrolment at Alberta's largest Jewish day school, The Calgary Jewish Academy whose student body numbers approximately 300. CJA Head of School Brenda English says the school has lost an estimated 40 students in grades 1 through 9 adding that some families are feeling the economic fallout of COVID, a situation that makes already costly school tuitions a more difficult stretch.

"This is not going to be just a one year impact," English said.

The Child Care program at CJA has also been negatively impacted. While the program previously had between 55 and 60 kids, there were only 28 registered when *AJNews* spoke to English at the beginning of August.

"Parents are waiting to see what things are going to be like and if they will need child care," English said.

Camp BB-Riback - Summer of 2020



The Goldsand/Vogel contingent, not only represent both Calgary and Edmonton in their roots, but also close to 100 Camp BB-Riback seasons in one big happy family. They spent a night together during the summer of Covid. "Both Nathaniel Vogel and Ross, Cale and Sam Goldsand volunteered this summer to help us through this difficult period in the camp's history," says camp Director Stacy Shaikin.

She expressed gratitude for Calgary Jewish Federation's tuition support through the Integrated Bursary Program. The IBP offers some financial assistance for qualifying families at Calgary's Jewish day schools.

Menorah Academy will never turn a child away due to lack of funds," said Head of School Rabbi Dovid Sass, adding that this is a top priority for the school's Board of Directors.

That priority is shared by Halpern Akiva Academy where current enrolment shows a slight uptick.

Enrolment remains consistent at Talmud Torah which anticipates a total of 121 students in 2020-2021, said Principal Sandra Marianicz.

"The key focus areas will be mitigation of risk, family choice and continuity of learning," said Marianicz, adding that safety of students, staff and family is critical to school leaders.

As *AJNews* began contacting the schools toward the end of July, COVID cases in both Edmonton and Calgary were rising. Adding to the concerns of some parents and

educators is what some perceived as a lack of guidance from the province concerning specific details of COVID preparedness.

While Alberta's other Jewish Day Schools are independent, Talmud Torah is part of the Edmonton Public School Board. The EPSB has released a re-entry strategy that Marianicz said is aligned with, and fleshes out, the provincial plan. Talmud Torah will be sending its school reentry plan to parents toward the middle of August.

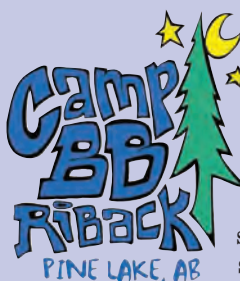
On August 4, Alberta's Minister of Education, Adriana LaGrange, and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Deena Hinshaw responded to the concerns of parents by mandating that school staff and students in grades 4 - 12 must wear masks on school buses and in common areas though students will not be required by the province to wear them when they are seated at their desks.

Masks are encouraged, though optional, for younger students through grade three. It is generally agreed that masks are a more difficult - and potentially riskier - proposition for younger children.

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Camp BB-Riback campaign aims to offset losses



Camp BB-Riback Director Stacy Shaikin is heartened by the generosity of the camp's "friends and supporters" in response to the announcement that shutting down for the summer would be a huge financial hit for the camp.

He is thrilled to announce that camp has reached the halfway point in their campaign to raise the much-needed funds to offset the loss of registration and rental fees, annual fundraisers and the postponement of the casino.

In a July 24 post to the community, Shaikin wrote, "We are so thankful to all of our Alumni, our community partners, camper families and of course our staff. As of now we have raised \$165,000. We are \$135,000 from our goal. It's not over but I can't state enough how overwhelmed and touched by the support you have given. If you haven't heard from me

personally...you will. I am committed to thanking each and every one of you personally over the next 6 weeks.

"Mazel Tov and Thank you to Etta Brown, the Brown family and all those Edmonton families who supported Etta's Bat Mitzvah initiative. You raised \$2100.00 that was directed to our Covid relief campaign. It's an amazing achievement, you and your family should be so proud.

"A massive thank you to the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation. They were a huge reason why we could open the grounds this summer. They gave us two grants, one for opening up the plant and one so we could invest in hand-washing stations for 2021.

"Thank you to the Federations in both Calgary and Edmonton for their continued support and leadership."

Shaikin continued: "As you may know we have been hosting limited numbers as part of our fundraising efforts. I can't thank my staff

of volunteers enough for their commitment and passion. Without this group we would not have been able to keep up the grounds and manage our visitors. This group is so special and they have earned and deserve all our respect. Thank you!"

Camp's business model needs to balance year-round expenses and investments with revenue from camper registration and summer rentals.

"The loss of registration and rental fees, annual fundraisers and the postponement of the casino means that we must depend more heavily on the generosity of people who love camp and value our place in the Alberta Jewish community," noted Shaikin.

"Please consider supporting Camp BB with a contribution to help us ensure many more summers of fun and memories out at Pine Lake!"

All donations are eligible for a tax receipt; for information visit campbb.com.

Calgary Holocaust Symposium at 36 . . . and beyond

By Maxine Fischbein

The Nazis murdered nearly her entire family. They attempted to rob her of her humanity by shaving her hair and reducing her to the number they tattooed on her forearm shortly after she was herded through the gates of hell at Auschwitz.

But prisoner #27523 had the last laugh.

On January 11, 2020, Holocaust survivor Freda Plucer died peacefully at the age of 97 surrounded by her loving family. Despite the enormous tragedy that befell her during the Shoah, Freda survived and thrived, becoming a family matriarch, a successful businesswoman and an advocate for Holocaust remembrance and education.

Her path was not an easy one. Before they perished, Freda's mother and sister pleaded with her to survive so she could share their story. It was this sacred duty that compelled her to choose life rather than the electric fence.

Some four decades later, in the mid-1980s, Survivors like Freda who had settled in Alberta were shocked by headlines about Jim Keegstra – an Eckville teacher who for years poisoned students' minds with anti-Semitic rants and Holocaust denial. Keegstra's highly publicized trial (which eventually led to his conviction under hate crime legislation) put some serious momentum behind plans for Holocaust education in Calgary.

The Annual Holocaust Education Symposium, launched in 1984, has reached maturity thanks, in greatest measure, to the courage and tenacity of Holocaust survivors like Freda Plucer and, more recently, second and third generation survivors who are sharing their stories. That growing list includes Freda's granddaughter, Marnie Bondar who, this past spring, was named co-chair of the Calgary Jewish Federation Human Rights and Holocaust Education Committee together with Dahlia Libin.

Sadly, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the 36th Annual Holocaust Education Symposium could not go ahead as scheduled this past May, but the double-chai milestone is a fitting time to revisit some of the history of Symposium while looking ahead to the future of Holocaust education in Calgary.

In 1981, Calgarians Barb and Ron Krell attended the first Worldwide Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and their Families in Israel together with Ron's brother Rob and their parents. During the gathering, the Dutch family

that had saved Rob Krell (b. 1940) from the Nazis was honoured as Righteous Among the Nations in a ceremony at Yad Vashem.

Hidden by Albert and Violetta Munnik and their daughter, Nora, Rob Krell later became a respected Psychiatrist in Vancouver and the driving force behind a Holocaust education symposium there that Barb and Ron Krell sought to emulate in Calgary.

"We thought it would be effective here too, and it has been," Ron Krell told *Alberta Jewish News*.

"Our interest was on the education side," recalled Barb Krell who, together with Ron, began speaking with the Calgary Public and Catholic school boards to gauge their interest. The Krells also spoke with Mount Royal College Biology professor Izak Paul who took the idea of a co-sponsorship to the leadership at MRU (now Mount Royal University). Their support, from Humanities Chair Hugh Macleod to President Don Baker, was unequivocal.

Paul coordinated Mount Royal's participation through the first 32 years of the Symposium until his retirement in 2016. In 2008, his outstanding contribution was recognized when he was honoured with MRU's inaugural Human Rights Award.

"I felt it was a very important educational program," recalled Paul, who is the grandson and great-grandson of Holocaust survivors.

"I wanted to be involved in memory of all the Jewish people who were murdered so ruthlessly in the Holocaust. It is especially important that young people learn the facts of the Holocaust... and not be silent bystanders when they see any form of racism. There is a broader lesson to be learned that is so important."

A pilot program held in the JCC auditorium in 1983 attracted 100 students from Calgary Catholic schools. The program was so well received that the Symposium "was launched the following year by the Calgary Jewish Centre and MRC in cooperation with the Calgary Catholic School District, Calgary Public School Board and the University of Calgary. The Symposium has grown steadily over the years with more and more public, separate, charter and private schools signing on. Today the massive under-taking, which takes place during the first or second week of May, attracts some 3,000 students.

One statistic stands alone in its enormity. It is estimated that more than 70,000 Grade 11 and 12 students have attended the Holocaust Education Symposium since 1984.

Despite the huge footprint when it comes to human resources, theatre and classroom space, tech support and even parking, MRU has hosted the Symposium without charge throughout the history of the event.

Since Izak Paul's retirement, the torch has been passed to Pearl Herscovitch, Chair of Mount Royal Library, and Carrie Scherzer, Professor of Psychology, who together coordinate on behalf of MRU, working in close partnership with Calgary



Holocaust survivor Freda Plucer z"l. (File photo)

Jewish Federation staff and volunteers who plan and organize the overall program.

Video documentation of survivor testimony got a big boost in the 1990s with the establishment of Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation. Long before that, Dwight Lemky, then the head of Audiovisual Services at Mount Royal, began videotaping the testimony of Survivors speaking at the Calgary Symposium. Many of those tapes have been rediscovered and there are plans in the works to reformat them so they can be shared with future generations of students.

A typical morning at Symposium begins with the arrival of a sea of yellow school busses and hundreds of students pouring through the West Gate doors at MRU.

It is a scene that former Holocaust Education and Remembrance Co-Chair Terry Groner says she will never forget.

"It felt good when we saw all the busses driving up and hundreds of students coming in," Groner said.

A Survivor who was hidden as a child in France, Groner expressed gratitude for the Survivors who have spoken at Symposium.

"I admire them to be able, year after year, to speak. It is difficult, but without them there would have been no program."

Each half-day session at Symposium includes an introduction by a Historian from MRU or the U of C and viewing of a documentary (most recently *The Path to Nazi Genocide*, from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum). The highlight for most attendees is the personal testimony of Holocaust survivors, prompting students to form long lines at the conclusion of the program so that they can share private, often emotionally charged moments with the Survivors they have heard.

Following one session at Symposium, former Calgary Jewish Federation Director of Human Rights and Holocaust Education Ilana Krygier Lapidés noticed a young man as he encountered Survivor Fira Oussatinski.

"He knelt, took her hand and told her how much what she said meant to him and promised her he'd never forget it," recalled Krygier Lapidés. "The love that passed between the two of them was palpable."

Krygier Lapidés recalled another incredible moment in 2009 when Calgary Jewish Federation hosted a community event marking the 25th Anniversary of Symposium. Supreme Court of Canada Justice Rosalie Abella, herself the daughter of Holocaust survivors, was the keynote speaker.

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Jewish schools prepare

Cont. from page 1

The schools are still in the midst of determining protocols that align with provincial requirements, including increased cleaning and sanitizing, especially in high-touch areas. The province is providing two reusable masks for every student, teacher and staff member; one face shield for each staff member; and contactless thermometers for each school.

At the top of schools' to-do lists is the procurement of additional PPE, hand sanitizers and cleaning products, the installment of Plexiglas barriers and the reorganization of classrooms and other spaces to ensure safe distancing.

That task is easiest for smaller schools. Halpern Akiva Academy, which anticipates welcoming between 75 and 80 students, has class sizes that typically range between 8 and 12 students per classroom, Rabbi Chaim Greenwald said.

With a student roster of approximately 90 elementary, junior high and high school students, Menorah Academy shares a similar advantage.

"Due to our small class sizes... it is significantly easier to make things work within the government regulations," Rabbi Dovid Sass said.

Class sizes at Talmud Torah are typically around 20 students. Principal Sandra Marianicz says that to ensure the required physical distancing, excess furniture is being removed from classes and desks will be organized in rows with all students facing the same direction.

At CJA, there is enough space to guarantee appropriate physical distancing of students even if the province were to mandate maximum class sizes of 15, Head of School Brenda English said.

Schools are re-evaluating the contents of each classroom to ensure they are appropriate given the need for frequent cleaning and adequate spacing.

Halpern Akiva Academy formed a COVID Committee that began meeting this past May bringing key stakeholders together in planning best practices once school resumes. The committee includes administrators, teachers, parents and caretakers.

In a further effort to control the spread of COVID, all four day schools will be changing the ways teachers and students navigate their schools.

At Calgary Jewish Academy, Menorah Academy and Talmud Torah, students will remain in their assigned classrooms with teachers moving from class to class.

This was the pre-COVID routine at Menorah Academy, with the exception of electives like Physical Education and art, said Rabbi Sass.

"We are trying to get kids back to the routine they were used to while being mindful of the new reality," Rabbi Sass said.

At Halpern Akiva Academy, students may, in some cases, move between classrooms, though protocols will be in place to limit exposure between cohorts. Decisions will be made based on the advice of Alberta's Chief Medical Officer and the public health nurse assigned to the school, Rabbi Greenwald said.

As per provincial guidelines, staff and students at each of the schools will have to answer COVID screening questions daily and the schools will be carefully monitoring for signs of illness. All are asking parents and staff members to stay at home if they are ill.

Procedures at Edmonton's Menorah Academy will include temperature checks, Rabbi Dovid Sass said.

Other protocols will mean some big changes in the day-to-day operations at each school.

"The goal is to try and limit as much exposure to the outside as possible," said Rabbi Sass.

Toward that end, at Calgary Jewish Academy, the difficult choice was made to temporarily suspend the participation of volunteers, cancel the lunch program and restrict the entry of parents into the school building – a necessary but unfortunate step given the school's high degree of interaction with parents and its reliance on the efforts of parent volunteers.

"It will be a very different way of doing business," CJA Head of School Brenda English said.

While the province has mandated a return to classes, increased COVID-19 cases could lead to two other potential scenarios – a hybrid of in person and online learning or a return to online learning only.

All four day schools say they are ready for either scenario. They pivoted rapidly to online platforms when schools closed in March, successfully providing full dual-curriculum programs.

All four Jewish day school principals praised their teachers, parents and students for their efforts to make the new normal a success.

At Talmud Torah, Sandra Marianicz said that she was



Edmonton Talmud Torah principal Sandra Marianicz during Read-In Week in 2019.

particularly proud of a teacher who started out unfamiliar with online platforms and apps like Google Classroom but jumped in with both feet to learn new skills.

Students are agile with tech, Marianicz said, adding, "They are fearless with it. They don't hesitate."

"Our students rose to the challenge with open minds, flexibility and resiliency," Marianicz said adding that the support of the school community as a whole was "heartwarming and inspiring," an observation shared by her colleagues at the other Jewish day schools.

"Menorah had a very successful online program with the use of Zoom as well as Google classroom," said Rabbi Dovid Sass.

"Teachers designed collaborative projects using 'breakout rooms' and saw that there were many students who excelled using these tools. The students were very resilient and put forth Herculean efforts in their unexpected transition to online classes," Rabbi Sass added.

At Halpern Akiva Academy, the school's graduation ceremony was a blended event with some students and family members celebrating in person and others participating online. Taking the celebration online allowed family members, like out-of-town grandparents, to kvell in real time, an opportunity that hadn't previously been available to them.

Similarly, the school's Akiva Broadcasting Network (ABN) was able to continue functioning after the lockdown, with students dedicating one of their broadcasts to giving retiring Principal John Hadden a memorable farewell.

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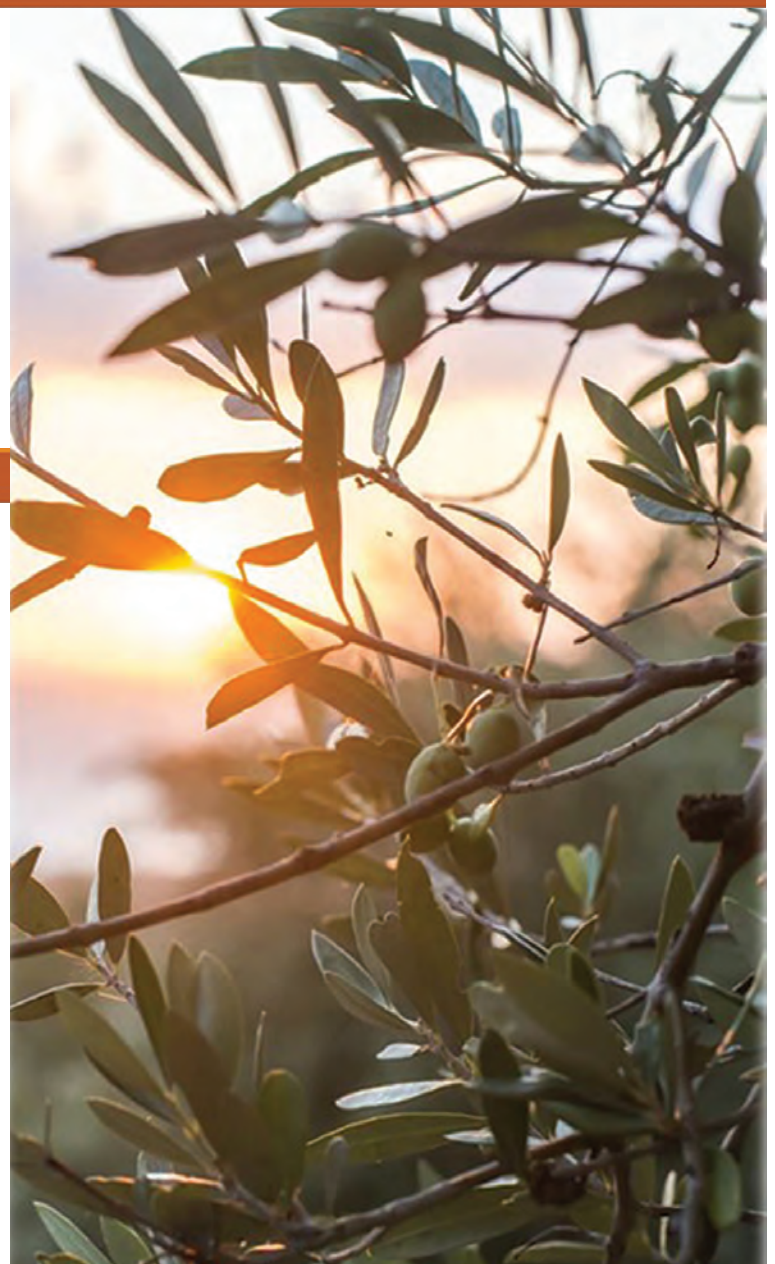
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Jewish schools prepare

Cont. from page 3

Other innovative online offerings included a live Shavuot program, and the participation of Grade 6 students in TED style talks which were accepted by TED and are now posted on YouTube.

“Our teachers are absolutely amazing,” said CJA Head of School Brenda English.

Several teachers engaged students by dressing up in costumes related to class content and used tools from “teach like a pirate,” noted English, adding that they also “utilized a range of apps on iPad and in google classroom to inspire students.”

CJA Faculty who weren't working full time supported students individually in literacy and numeracy. The school also provided online classes to students in grades 8 and 9 so they could earn high school credits in Career and Life Management (CALM). A Foods Basics 10 Course was available online for students in Grades 6 and 7. Students also engaged in virtual presentations in pairs and groups.

“Students did an outstanding job hosting assemblies and CJA held community Shabbat on Zoom each Friday,” English said.

It is just this kind of Jewish tam – flavour – that prompts many parents to choose a Jewish day school education for their children.

That is why Talmud Torah Principal Sandra Marianicz says she was saddened that TT had to hit the pause button on traditional end-of-year ceremonies like the Grade 1 Siddur and Grade 2 Torah Ora celebrations. Plans are in the works to mark those milestones during the rapidly approaching new school year.

Students everywhere were disappointed when COVID cancelled milestones like graduations and school celebrations. At Talmud Torah, care was taken to ensure that Grade 6 students would take special memories with them as they transitioned to various Edmonton junior high schools. A virtual ceremony was created and shared with families in real time.

But, there remained a craving for the real thing, so a school parade was arranged with Grade 6 families parked in places of honour in front of the school while the rest of the school community was invited to drive by and wish the departing students mazel tov.

“It was the perfect way to provide closure for students, parents and staff,” said Marianicz praising the efforts to which everyone went to create a robust celebration with horns honking and colourful posters sending messages of encouragement to the class of 2020 as they move on to



Rabbi Chaim Greenwald, Calgary Halpern Akiva Academy. (File photo).



Rabbi Dovid Sass, Edmonton Menorah Academy. (File photo).

junior high.

Because some students and parents or other family members have underlying health conditions that elevate the risks associated with COVID, some children will remain at home when the school year begins. Regardless of parents' reasons for keeping their kids at home, all four schools are looking at ways to continue supporting students who don't walk through their classroom doors in September.

At CJA, dropping enrolment led to the layoffs of five teachers, a situation that will “take its toll” in terms of sustaining simultaneous in-class and online learning, Brenda English said.

Despite the challenge English says, “We want to provide supports for kids who can't be in school.”

“We will work through this on an individual basis with as much flexibility as possible,” said Halpern Akiva Academy's Rabbi Chaim Greenwald.

“We can accommodate everybody and I expect we will. We don't want to deny any child a Jewish education,” Rabbi Greenwald added.

Menorah Academy is likewise dedicated to supporting kids' education at home. The school will work with families on a case by case basis to address each child's unique educational needs.

Talmud Torah families have the advantage of the Edmonton Public School Board's system-wide support for education at school or online, says Sandra Marianicz, who agrees that the choice depends on the needs of each child and family. To add flexibility and allow for multiple points of entry, the school year has been divided into four semesters.

Children don't learn in lockstep and instructional changes due to COVID-19 increased the potential for academic gaps. When Alberta's Jewish day schools pivoted to online learning, for example, the experience was not one-size-fits-all.

“Some kids excel at online learning and are way ahead of grade level. Some are behind. We are prepared to find gaps and we are dedicated to meeting needs,” Halpern Akiva Academy's Rabbi Chaim Greenwald said.

Teachers at all four schools will be working harder than ever to determine new baselines for individual students and for classes as students head or Zoom back to school.

A web survey conducted by Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies between July 24 and 26 asked Canadians whether or not they would send their children back to school this September. Of the 1,517 responses, 58% said yes, 29% said no and 13% were undecided. More parents in Alberta than anywhere else in Canada responded that they would most likely keep their children at home.

Marina Segal is preparing to send her daughters back to school come Fall, to grade one and grade eight respectively. She says she is comfortable doing so given the school's caring, family atmosphere.

A Halpern Akiva Academy parent, Segal says that some parents she knows “can't wait” for their children to go back to school.

“I think the majority are nervous and waiting for more government clarity. People want more substance on what the reopening will actually look like. There is so much uncertainty right now,” Segal said, adding that she was more confident about the prospect of sending her kids to school when there were fewer active COVID cases in Calgary.

When AJNews spoke to Segal, the Premier had just announced the reopening of schools during a week that saw a dramatic spike in Alberta COVID cases.

“Often announcements are based on two-week old information. It creates a disconnect,” Segal said.

While she doesn't see signs of anxiety in her children about going back to school, she is concerned about long-term effects on children growing up in the midst of what could be a protracted pandemic.

“Things that happen when we are little can have a huge

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Meet Mrs. Cameron – new principal at Halpern Akiva Academy

The Halpern Akiva Academy in Calgary is pleased to welcome their new principal Mrs. Caitlyn Cameron. Mrs. Cameron is returning to Calgary after teaching for 7 years at Edmonton's Menorah Academy, where she taught grades 7 to 9 as well as all of the core subjects as a lead teacher. She holds a Bachelor of Education and a Master of Educational Studies, both from the University of Alberta.

Alberta Jewish News caught up with Mrs. Cameron and asked her these questions.

Q Tell us about your background.

Before working at Menorah Academy I was a daycare director for YMCA before and after school programs, which instilled in me the ability to work with large groups of children of various ages and challenged me to find activities and programs to keep over 50 students at a time, engaged, safe and happy. This experience also gave me the opportunity to work on my managerial skills such as payroll, staff recruitment and mentorship, and adhering to multiple stakeholder concerns such as parents, licensing and accreditation officers. I took these skills into my classroom at Menorah and working in that environment enabled me the opportunity to teach a variety of grades and subjects, which propelled me to become an expert in the Alberta Program of Studies. Whenever possible I strive to instill independence in my students and I enjoy finding ways for them to interact with material in a variety of manners. As a lead teacher I discovered a passion for mentoring and guiding teachers, finding engaging resources and helping coworkers weed through the red tape of teaching in order to feel successful and as in love with this career as I am.

Q What are your favourite subjects?

My favourite subject growing up was science, my grade 7 science teacher instilled in me an interest in scientific concepts and theories and my high-school biology teacher compounded that passion for discovering how things around me work and interact, which lead me to major in biology during my undergraduate degree. As a teacher I have discovered more of a passion for teaching math (something I never thought I would say). I enjoy how the

subject lends itself to be related to real world concepts so students can easily see why this is important and how it will impact them later in life. I like using manipulatives, videos, games and projects to reinforce math concepts.

Q What are you most excited about in coming to Halpern Akiva Academy?

I am so excited to come to Akiva because I immensely enjoy being in a small school where I have the opportunity to create close relationships with parents, students and coworkers that last throughout the years. I am delighted for the opportunity to be part of a progressive team that is willing to take on new challenges such as the BrightMinds Math program in order to increase student engagement and success.

Q What do you anticipate the upcoming school year will look like? Covid-19 impact?

This school year may look a little different than some we have seen in the past but it will still be filled with important and meaningful learning experiences. Everyone who is a part of our school community will need to pitch in to help keep our students, staff, parents and community members safe and healthy. By remaining flexible and addressing issues as they arise, we will be able to get through this together.

Q How would you describe your teaching philosophy?

My philosophy of education revolves around building relationships. I believe that students learn best in safe, caring and inclusive environments. In order to create this type of classroom I work hard to build positive and supportive relationships with my students and between my students. Once strong relationships have been fostered through various strategies a space is created where risks can be taken, and learning can be accomplished. In my classroom I like to focus on the unique and special differences between students while guiding them to have an appreciation of their own and others' strengths. I emphasize treating others the way you would like to be treated through showing respect and appreciation for our individual differences and similarities.



Graduation ceremonies at Halpern Akiva Academy combined in-person and online celebrations.


Through building relationships with my students, between my students and with my co-workers I am able to be a more effective teacher and therefore positively influence student success. Positive relationships between students, staff members, teachers and parents lead to a safe space where everyone can flourish. I always have the best interests of my students in mind and aim for the school to be as effective as possible in the goal of establishing in students, an excellence in academics and character.

Q Most important question: Flames or Oilers?

This is the most challenging question yet!! It has been a topic of hot debate between my husband and I since we learnt we were moving cities. He is a diehard Oilers fan born and raised in Edmonton, I however being born in Calgary but moving to Edmonton in Junior High have been on both sides of the fence, so I look forward to going back to my Flames roots and beginning a family rivalry.



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Welcome To Our New Principal!

MRS. CAITLYN CAMERON

Caitlyn Cameron is an experienced educator and director. She spent the last 7 years at Menorah Academy in Edmonton, where she taught grades 2 through 9 and all core subjects. She is passionate about incorporating hands-on, real world projects into her classrooms.

Mrs. Cameron was a lead teacher with responsibility for teacher mentorship, professional growth plans, coworker collaboration, and yearly educational plans. She has a Bachelor of Education degree and a Masters in Educational Studies, both from the University of Alberta.

Mrs. Cameron is originally from Calgary and is looking forward to returning to the city with her husband to be a part of the Halpern Akiva Academy family.

We look forward to seeing you back in school in September!

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Special Guest Cantor for Kehilat Shalom High Holidays



Chazan: Cory Winter

Holiday Cantor at Congregation Beth Shalom in Temecula, California.

This coming High Holidays, Kehilat Shalom will feature a well-loved and accomplished Chazan: Cory Winter, Cantor Emeritus of Congregation BJBE (B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim) in Deerfield, Illinois.

Chazan Winter served as Cantor for BJBE for over twenty years, during which time he appeared as a Tenor Soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as well as with several other performing groups. In recent years, he served as High

"I daven traditional nusach faithfully," Chazan Winter says, "and encourage a great deal of congregational participation. I take the position, but not myself, seriously. I also welcome congregational members to do occasional davening."

In his effort to be inclusive, Chazan Winter strives to make those who are not as Hebrew literate feel included through music and other liturgical means.

His varied education includes a Master's Degree in Voice from Northwestern University and a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education, University of Wisconsin. A certified Cantor with both the American Conference of Cantors and Cantors Assembly, he has led worship services in both Rabbinical and Cantorial roles.

His love of Chazanut led him to pursue intensive study with composer and chazzan Max Janowski, known for his rendition of Avinu Malkeinu as interpreted by Barbara Streisand.

His repertoire is not limited to Cantorial music alone. He served as Chorus Master and Assistant Conductor of the Sacramento Opera for over 10 years, consistently winning accolades in the local and national press.

Among his many accomplishments, Chazan Winter says, "I'm very proud that a dozen of my students have become Rabbis and Cantors."

Chazan Winter will join Rabbi Leonard Cohen in leading High Holiday services at Kehilat Shalom beginning with Erev Rosh Hashana on Friday, September 18 through the end of Yom Kippur on Monday, September 28. Reservations are required due to health and safety precautions.

For more information, please contact Sam Fishman (President of Kehilat Shalom) at 403-613-1848 or info@kscalgary.org. "We look forward to welcoming you to a musical and meaningful service," says Rabbi Cohen.

Jewish schools prepare

Cont. from page 4

impact [later in life]. I'm worried it will create a wave of anxiety. At some point there will be some sort of fallout from this."

Adult tension was certainly palpable throughout Alberta following the Province's July 21 back to school announcement when Premier Jason Kenney and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Deena Hinshaw acknowledged what educators and parents most dread.

"We will almost certainly identify cases of COVID-19 in students and staff in the fall," Hinshaw said.

As kids, teachers and school staff head back to school, the number one priority will be managing that risk.

"Success in keeping the school community safe will depend on the participation of all parties, including the students. When everyone buys in and cares about one another, it is much more effective," Rabbi Chaim Greenwald said.

Effective communication with parents about COVID preparedness and other aspects of their kids' return to school is critical.

"As excited as parents are, they want to know what will

be done [to protect their children]," Rabbi Sass said.

"Guidelines are likely to change. We will continue to communicate with parents," said Rabbi Sass, who added that parents understand this "won't happen overnight."

While the sense of celebration in starting a new school year is muted by COVID fears, there are also some very positive vibes.

"As well as we did with online learning at the end of the last school year [including] many victories in the face of adversity, there was so much missing in not seeing [students] face to face," said Rabbi Chaim Greenwald who added that teachers and students are coming back to school having learned new skills and new ways of doing things.

"The pandemic created a situation that demanded creativity. We are coming back better for it [having] collaborated in ways we couldn't have imagined. That's a good thing."

While things look a little different at each of Alberta's Jewish day schools, their heads of school are united in their efforts to keep our community's children as safe as possible. And all agree that while COVID has brought contagion, the flexibility and ingenuity of teachers, parents and kids has led to some good things – increased partnerships with parents, new modalities in teachers' tool



Graduation celebrations at Calgary Jewish Academy

kits and expanding ways to help kids achieve and thrive whether they are studying in school or at the kitchen table.

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative writer for Alberta Jewish News.



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Have a community announcement or upcoming virtual event or program?
 Email: info@jewishcalgary.org to add it to our **Jewish Calgary Together** newsletter and webpage



A MESSAGE FROM ADAM

This summer has been anything but ordinary. COVID-19 and its impacts continue to challenge us to work and play differently; to find and keep a positive outlook in very uncertain times. While there is cautious optimism for a slow and steady return to some semblance of normalcy, we all recognize that we cannot predict the future. Therefore, we must continue to be flexible and realistic with our expectations. We are operating in a world without a prescribed playbook, one in which we must collectively and collaboratively navigate challenges, and find opportunities in those challenges.

From the outset, our community's agencies and their volunteer and professional leadership responded with innovation, strength, and compassion. They immediately came together to collaborate, share information and best practices, and have continued demonstrating care for one another, as well as our community. Now that we have seemingly reached a leveling period during which the initial shock of the pandemic has worn off, the ongoing drain from the remaining uncertainty and existing challenges continues to sap our energy and causes us to triple-think every decision we make.

While I understand that these times have been, and continue to be, difficult for many of us, I hope one decision we all make is to OPT-IN to Jewish Calgary. In the face of adversity, there is no better time for us to step up and be a *dugma* (shining example) to our children, grandchildren, friends, and others in our community. Opting-in means not only financially, but equally as participants. I have firsthand experience with the amazing efforts being made by our synagogues, schools, and agencies. They are providing quality, Jewish programming and services, working to keep us all connected – even if it means sending greetings through our phones and computer monitors. These organizations recognize that what they're able to offer is different than what our community is accustomed to. Yet, for months now, our agencies and leaders have worked tirelessly to provide points of Jewish contact while working equally diligently to ensure our community is viable for the future. This has not been an easy balance or task, and will certainly remain a priority challenge for months, if not years, to come.

Our community cannot abandon these agencies, nor can we abandon hope for a bright and meaningful

future. Jewish Calgary has been the envy of many others for decades, and should remain a glowing example of what a small but mighty Jewish community can be. I implore all of us to be patient, grateful, generous, and active with, and in, our community. Keep your synagogue membership, maintain your enrolment in our schools, give to the causes that desperately rely on your support, lean on the services and programs that keep you connected and whole, join virtual programming and sessions despite your Zoom fatigue, and most importantly, dream with me of a bright and meaningful future for Jewish Calgary. The seeds we continue to sow and care for today are the only things that will ensure there is Jewish life in Calgary in the future. For all of us: our children, grandchildren, and those who will follow, it is our communal responsibility and privilege to OPT-IN.

Wishing you an enjoyable and safe rest of the summer – *B'Shalom!*

Adam Silver
 Adam Silver, CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

Building an inclusive community is a priority. Contact us and we will make every effort to meet your needs.

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Please email your cover letter and resume by Thursday, August 27 to Diana Kalef at dkalef@jewishcalgary.org.

NEW FOR 2020 JEWISH TOGETHER FUND

Our community has shown incredible strength during 2020, but many organizations still have financial needs that are more than our annual UJA campaign can support. To offer additional assistance this year, we have created the **Jewish Together Fund (JTF)**. JTF will be funded using 50% of the increased portion of every donation that is over and above the 2019 amount.

Applications for funding from JTF will be offered to all local Jewish organizations later this fall.

Jewish Calgary Together

CONNECT WITH US FOR THE LATEST COMMUNITY UPDATES, RESOURCES, VIRTUAL EVENTS, AND PROGRAMS

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5780 - who would have imagined?



By **Rabbii Gila Caine**

Now as the year comes to an end and we enter the final weeks of 5780 I'm looking back astonished at what we've been through in the past months. Who would have imagined? How could we imagine a global pandemic and civil unrest around the globe?

I think we could imagine, and some have been imagining, but as societies we are not listening to the idea (even a truth by now) that as we treat the world, the world will treat us. As we devour away other species' natural habitat, they and their viruses will flow into ours. As we deplete resources and bruise the land, so will we have less land to live on and from. As we think only of financial profit and break up our chains of production to fling

around the globe, so will local small economies suffer, so we find ourselves out of jobs, out of dignity. As we disconnect from a mindful and healthy pace of life, so will we find ourselves exhausted – physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The reason Torah begins with a holistic story of creation, a story of everything, is to impress upon us the interconnectedness of creation. As we treat the Earth, so are we treated.

My understanding of the science and reality of our times is that the single most pressing issue our generation/s are facing is the climate havoc we are causing in the world. As a rabbi, I can say this is not only a scientific, social, political and economical catastrophe in the making but also a spiritual one. I'm reminded of something Maggid Andrew Ramer wrote in his fictional post-apocalyptic collection "Fragments of the Brooklyn Talmud": "I think of my grandmother, roasting a chicken for dinner. I think of her stories of the Nazi concentration camps that her mother

survived. I think of the stories I heard and read about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A disaster here, a disaster there. A nightmare here, a nightmare there. All so contained. And to my dismay – I find myself jealous." (p. 132).

This year is a wake-up call to all of humanity, even the humanity here in Edmonton: this is what our future might begin to look like, and none of it will be contained. If we disconnect ourselves from Earth, it will disconnect itself from us. As we enter the month of Elul, the month of mercy and forgiveness and Slichot, we must listen carefully, and work on true Tshuvah/ Return – to a better relationship with creation.

To end, here is a new translation I have done for ancient/everyday blessing of Asher Yatzar, a prayer thanking G-d for our bodily functions. The translation, for our times, is a form of midrash echoing our personal body with the body of the Earth. For our own body to survive, we must do our best in the coming year and years to come, to make sure the greater body flourishes as well:

Blessed are you Adonai our G-d, Creator of Life You wisely crafted our body Forming within us hollow tunnels and caves. It is Sacred truth, well known and revealed That if one of them be wrongly or opened or wrongly sealed We could not stand before you even for a moment in Time. Baruch atah Adonai, Healer of all flesh, Creator of wonders.

Alberta gov't has double standard for 'racism'

By **Jeremy Appel**

Alberta's Jewish federations have accepted Alberta Federation of Labour president Gil McGowan's public apology for a Twitter thread comparing the province's United Conservative government to the Nazis after meeting with the union leader.

The July 13 thread was in reference to the UCP's Bill 32, which places restrictions on picketing and requires workers to opt in to union political activity. In it, McGowan quoted Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels, "always accuse your enemies of what you are doing yourselves."

"That's exactly what's going on with Jason Kenney's union-busting Bill 32. It's the UCP and its corporate friends who are gaming the system," he tweeted. "And, yes, I'm accusing the UCP of adopting tactics pioneered by the Nazis and being implemented by right-wing authoritarians today."

The response from the Jewish Federation of Edmonton was swift.

"We are aware of recent comments on social media from @gilmcgowan, President of @ABFedLabour comparing the UCP to the Nazis. Together with @jewishcalgary we have reached out directly to Gil McGowan's office to discuss our concerns. @cijainfo," their account tweeted the same day.

Although the federations took the lead on this matter, B'nai Brith was also vocally critical of McGowan's remarks.

"I was deeply offended," says B'nai Brith Alberta public affairs manager Abe Silverman, who is a Holocaust survivor. "To make the comparison between a duly elected government in a liberal democracy and a despotic, totalitarian system is abhorrent. It boggles the mind that someone of McGowan's intelligence would make that kind of comparison."

Silverman said he believes McGowan's posts were a product of overheated political rhetoric.

After meeting with the Jewish Federations of Edmonton and Calgary, he acknowledged this use of a Goebbels quote could re-traumatize Holocaust survivors and their offspring.

"I recognize now that there were many other ways that I could have, and should have, expressed my concerns about the global rise of authoritarianism and the UCP's use of authoritarian-inspired tactics that didn't involve comparison with the Nazis," said McGowan.

Jewish Federation of Edmonton CEO Debby Shoctor confirmed to the *Alberta Jewish News* that the federations had requested a formal apology.

"Through our direct engagement with Mr. McGowan, we feel he understands his error in comparing current day politics to one of the world's most horrific historical events," says an unsigned statement from both federations.

"We appreciate his willingness to work with Jewish Federation of Edmonton and Calgary Jewish Federation to discuss this issue, and we are optimistic that this outcome will serve as a guide in ensuring Anti-Semitic language is not tolerated or accepted in any way, shape or form."

The federations' response was muted by comparison when Leighton Gray, a UCP appointee to the Provincial Court Nominating Committee, which vets judges, was revealed in June to have made anti-Semitic remarks online.

Edmonton Federation president Steven Shaffir told *AJNews* at the time that they preferred to express their concerns with the government privately, referring to Premier Jason Kenney's "long-standing friendship with the Jewish community and Israel."

The Alberta government has a double standard when condemning racist rhetoric – loudly misrepresenting McGowan's remarks while labelling Gray's sexist, racist, anti-Semitic views and far-right conspiracy theories as "a diversity of views." UCP speechwriter Paul Bunner's prior articles calling Indian Residential Schools a "bogus genocide story" were also swept under the rug by the Alberta government, despite calls for his termination.

It's important that the Jewish community be a public voice of civility - publicly condemn hate rhetoric and racism against all minorities. Our outrage must include but not be restricted to anti-Semitic acts – and it most certainly should not be guided by party politics.

Jeremy Appel is a local initiative journalism reporter for Alberta Jewish News.

Temple Beth Ora

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THE WORLD STANDS UPON THREE THINGS: THE TORAH, THE TEMPLE SERVICE, AND THE PRACTICE OF ACTS OF PIETY. (MISHNAH AVOT 1:2)

Some things do not change, even in 2020: the need for deep and relevant Torah, for prayer which connects us with other Jews, and for taking care of each other. From the first day of lockdown and throughout this Covid19 pandemic, TBO has kept its (virtual) gates open for Torah, prayer and care.

Now, we are delighted to invite you to join us for traditional, creative, online, outdoor-in person services to welcome in 5781! Full dates and times will be advertised as we near the High Holidays.

Here's a shout out to our board and many volunteers, your ongoing work and creativity make sure TBO isn't just surviving Covid, but is growing in so many ways. Todah Rabahl

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Best wishes to the Jewish Community

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The Rosh HaShanah Edition of Alberta Jewish News prints on September 8, 2020.

The deadline for material is September 2

Ask the Edmonton Talmud Torah teachers

By Edmonton Talmud Torah teachers

(AJNews) – As Moreh Ari Sniderman alluded to in his recent AJN article, this past school year was unprecedented and quite the rollercoaster ride!

We, the teachers, are so very proud of the learning that happened, both before COVID-19 and after, even with all the strange and new developments that this year threw at us.

So, what exactly were some of the highlights from this past school year, 2019-2020?

Ms. Jennifer Kovacs, the Kindergarten teacher, remembers the excitement around some of the cross-graded activities; the annual Kindergarten – Grade 6 Buddy Program, baking Chanukah cookies with the Grade 5 class, making latkes with the Gr. 3 class. She and her students also loved the whole-school activities. Ms. Kovacs is very excited to meet the next group of Kinders and to, hopefully, get back into the school!

For Ben Ragosin, who teaches Music, Science and Hebrew Language Arts, there was great excitement around the establishment of the Gr. 6 Guitar Program in Music, where 14 guitars were purchased with the help of the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation.

“We are so fortunate to have a full, Hebrew bilingual Music program at the school, led by the very talented Music teacher, Ben Ragosin,” states Robin Marcus. “The children learn (at different ages), ukulele, guitar, percussion (including darbuka drums, xylophones, glockenspiels, assorted hand-held instruments) and recorders.”

Ben also was very proud of the fact that we were able to host Holocaust survivor and speaker, Mrs. Eva Olsson, at the school. She spoke to the students, answered some of their excellent questions, and was an honoured guest at the Grades 4 – 6 Kabbalat Shabbat Celebration. Post-COVID, Ben loved putting together, with the participation of staff, students and parents, a virtual Ma Nishtana video for Pesach. A true testament to the power of community!

For Miss Jessica Holtzman and her Grade 2 class, a memory highlight was The Maccabee Market. This was a hands-on, cross-curricular project brought to life through a collaboration between the Gr. 2 students, Miss Jessica, teacher Bianna Kuksin and the Gr. 4 students. During this Chanukah activity, the students budgeted for, planned, advertised, and brought to life, a market stand selling crafts, drinks, food and Judaica. Best of all, the students donated all of their earnings to the local food bank. Once the school moved to online learning, Miss Jessica designed a cross-curricular project based on that famous song: The Lukshion Kugel Eater. Students were asked to design a trap (that does not hurt or injure the Lukshion Kugel Eater in any way!), name the trap, draw a picture of their family during Shabbat dinner, and then write a descriptive paragraph detailing how the trap works. They were also

asked to label their family members and objects, in their picture, in Hebrew. Students thoroughly enjoyed working on this project! Miss Jessica also loved participating in Moreh Ari’s school-wide virtual Kabbalat Shabbat Celebrations.

Robin Marcus’s memory highlights from this past year include giving each child a Breathing Buddy (stuffy) and teaching the Grade ones some Mindfulness techniques which were used throughout the year – even once online learning took place. Brain Breaks was another terrific, virtually daily, activity. Brain Breaks could involve dancing or moving along to a video on the SmartBoard, doing fun movement activities in the classroom or going to the Gym for an extra few minutes of “burning off energy.” Other highlights are the Math and Guided Reading Station times, where students are able to move, in small groups, through a variety of Math-related or Literacy related activities.

Robin says: “I love having the chance to introduce the children to new books and reading or math strategies and to see their learning up close, while they work in small groups or individually. Grade One is a magical time when reading, writing and math abilities take off!”

Once the school moved to online teaching and learning, a highlight for Robin was growing her own technological learning curve and watching parents and students get the hang of these platforms and really rolling with it all.

Moreh Ari Sniderman reflects on the year and states that in addition to memorable classroom activities, there is delight in the way that the community is strengthened by the work done by students and teachers at Talmud Torah. He feels the community sensibility, of TT, when his classmates of the 90’s come to watch their kids perform Chanukah songs, as they did back in their day; when he meets up in the halls with three of his old classmates as they pick up their kids from daycare, down the hall from his own classroom; when his now university-aged students come in to talk to his classes about Jewish life after TT or to teach Israeli dance.

“We call Talmud Torah the Community School and seeing it live up to its name keeps it all meaningful,” says Moreh Ari.

A highlight for Ms. Caroline Borgen, and for her Gr. 4/5 and 6 classes, were the kindness challenges undertaken. Both the “Kindness Challenge” for the month of February, which was done along with the grade 2 class, and the weekly “Spread the Love” activity were two memories that made a lasting impact on both students and teachers. Recognizing and spreading kindness and positivity carried on in a variety of ways outside of these projects.

“When the pandemic hit and we made the shift to online learning, the adaptability and resilience that students demonstrated is something that sticks out in my mind,” states Ms. Borgen. “In such



Fourteen guitars were purchased for TT with help from the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation.

a challenging time, students rose to the occasion and did their absolute best to navigate a new learning environment. I will always remember singing Happy Birthday to students through Google Meets video chats, (it sounded as lovely as you are imagining!), and watching student confidence grow as they led their classmates in their own planned Google Meets morning meetings.” Ms. Borgen is certain that, at this point, while the future remains unknown, she has no doubt that TT students have the resilience and grit to shine no matter what their school situation looks like.

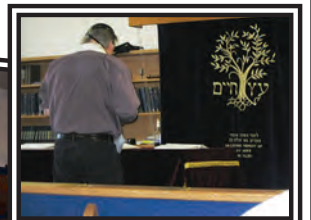
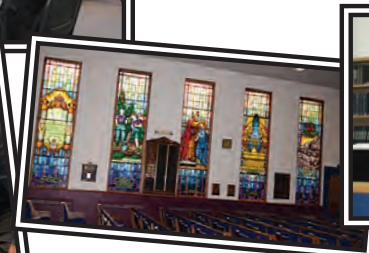
For teachers, parents and students, the COVID lockdown brought a whole host of changes and challenges: parents having to become teachers of their own children; students having to learn how to use Google Meets and Google Classroom, as well as creating videos and having to work more independently; teachers having to learn a whole host of technological platforms and techniques and finding ways to keep young students engaged and learning. Then, of course, we had teachers who were doing all of these things at once: teaching their own children, learning an incredible amount of new technology and teaching their classroom students in a brand new way. What a year it was!

The TT Staff want to wish all community members a wonderful and restful summer – it is much needed and well-deserved and look forward to a successful new school year.

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The Edmonton Talmud Torah Society’s Board of Directors wishes to thank **YOU**, our very generous donors, for stepping forward to support our recent **Student Bursary Campaign**. From parents, community members, to alumni near and far, you have shown true pride in TT and have contributed to its longevity by supporting our Jewish families during this unprecedented economic time.

Thanks to YOU we have surpassed our goal of \$10,000!

Each and every gift will go a long way in helping our families continue the legacy of Jewish education for their children at Talmud Torah. This pandemic has created a lot of economic uncertainty for our families, and YOU have given them comfort, security and stability.

The need continues, however. If you feel a commitment to the future of Talmud Torah as a Jewish community school, and wish to continue supporting our families, please consider donating.

www.talmudtorahsociety.com

Once again, we sincerely thank every one of you who have donated to this important campaign in support of the Edmonton Talmud Torah Society and the youngest generation – our Jewish community.

Edmonton Talmud Torah Board of Directors

from the Sources Oh Give Me a Home...

by Eliezer Segal

When the Bible wanted to convey the idea of extraordinary strength, one of its favourite images was an animal called the “re'em.” This creature was particularly notable for the size and might of its horns, as illustrated by Moses’s blessing to Joseph: “his horns are like the horns of re’ems, with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth.”

We no longer know exactly what animal the biblical authors had in mind. The most popular candidate for the identification is an animal known as the “aurochs” [= primordial ox]. It was known for its formidable front-facing, contoured horns and its combative personality, but has been extinct since the seventeenth century. The ancient Greek Septuagint translation identified it as “monokeros,” which the King James English Bible rendered literally as “unicorn.”

As was their custom in such matters, the sages of the Talmud and Midrash exaggerated the magnitude of the re'em to, well, biblical proportions. Rabbah bar bar Hana, the notorious raconteur of fantastic fish tales, related that he had personally seen a newborn re'em and it was “as large as Mount Tabor,” which the Talmud calculates as forty parasangs (about two hundred kilometers). The rabbis tried to infer from this that it could not have fit inside Noah’s ark, thereby lending support to a theory that the land of Israel had been exempted from the flood. Alternatively, it was suggested that the re'em might have been tethered to the ark and allowed to swim alongside it without actually boarding the craft.

Rabbenu Jacob Tam and the Tosafot school of Talmud commentators analyzed the pertinent passages regarding the identification of the re'em, and observed that “it is not correct when we designate buffaloes as ‘re'em.’ It would appear from this that Jews in twelfth-century France were assigning Hebrew names to their cattle, and that one species was popularly identified as the re'em. This was of course not the bison that roamed the plains of the New World, but rather a species of water buffalo—Rabbenu

Tam uses the French term “buffle”—which were harnessed to perform jobs like pulling wagons and plowing. This in itself would disqualify them from being the re'em since the book of Job asks rhetorically “Will the re'em consent to serve you?”

The buffles also happen to be much smaller than Rabbah bar bar Hana’s forty parasangs; and even if we allow that gargantuan sizes of buffalo also existed, normal-sized versions were presumably available for Noah to fit inside his ark, eliminating the need for some of the Talmud’s farfetched interpretations.

Another candidate for the designation “buffalo” was the creature referred to in rabbinic lore as the “wild ox” [shor ha-bar]. The sages of the Mishnah disputed whether it was to be treated as a fundamentally domestic animal that had gone feral or as a wild beast that was subsequently domesticated.

There are several ramifications to this question when it comes to practical Jewish religious law. Notably, according to the Torah the blood of kosher wild animals (such as deer) must be covered with earth or sand after their slaughter, and certain of their fats (helev) may be eaten, unlike those of domestic sheep or cattle. The dispute relates in part to whether or not the wild ox is to be equated (as it evidently was in the ancient Aramaic translation of the Torah) to the species called “te'o” that appears in a list of kosher animals in Deuteronomy.

In the eleventh century Rabbenu Hananel of Kairouan, Tunisia, equated the Mishnah’s wild ox with the buffalo and reported in the name of the Babylonian Geonim that its status remained undecided, and we must therefore follow the more stringent implications of both possibilities.

Indeed, medieval Hebrew linguists knew of a dispute between the Babylonian Geonim Saadiah and Hai with reference to the creature known in Arabic as “jamoos” that is generally identified as a buffalo. Rav Saadiah argued that the jamoos is the same as the “m’ri,” a species mentioned in scripture as a sacrificial animal, which

means that there can be no doubt about its being a domestic species. Rav Hai, on the other hand, claimed that the word “m’ri” is not a distinct species at all, but an adjective meaning “fattened” that can refer to both cattle and wild beasts. Hence it has no real bearing on the identification of the wild ox.

Rabbenu Hananel’s interpretation was cited by Rabbi Jacob Landau in the fifteenth century; however Rabbi Landau himself dissented from it, citing authorities (like Rabbi Isaiah di Trani) who had equated the wild ox with the domestic m’ri. A prominent expert in talmudic zoology observed that in light of all these sources, the “wild” in the term “wild ox” cannot be understood literally.

Any rabbinic discussion about doubtful domestic / wild classifications will inevitably lead us to the case of the “koi,” a creature that sometimes seems to have been concocted purely in order to fuel talmudic debates. The Jewish sources described it as a creature, likely a bearded gazelle or antelope, whose status was either unknown, inherently indeterminate, or a distinct hybrid of a goat and a deer or gazelle, analogous to the “tragelaphos” or “hircocervus” mentioned in ancient Greek and Latin texts.

It should therefore not surprise us that Rabbi Jacob Weil in fifteenth-century Germany explicitly identified the koi as “what in German is designated a büffel.” He therefore recommended that kois should be slaughtered along with a fowl, regarding which no doubt exists as to the obligation to perform the covering of its blood. In this way it is possible to avoid the recitation of a superfluous blessing.

At the very least we may have stumbled onto the origin of “buffalo wings.”

‘From the Sources’ by Eliezer Segal is sponsored by the Zeisler Families of Edmonton, Calgary and New York City

Calgary Launches Shawl-Om Project

By Sari Shernofsky

Calgary Jewish crafters have launched a new community-based project to create and distribute shawls and blankets to frail or isolated members of the community.

The innovative project was conceived by Michele Doctoroff. “I noticed that the Christian community creates ‘prayer shawls’ for their members, and I thought that we could do something similar – comfort shawls and blankets!”

Michele shared her idea with Sari Shernofsky, Jewish Community Chaplain, and Rimon, Calgary’s Jewish needlework guild, and soon a committee was formed, composed of Rimon President Esther Silberg, Nadine Waldman, Marilyn Samuels and Trudy Cowan, as well as Michele and Sari.

The project encourages community members to knit, sew, crochet or quilt lovely covers that can be used as small lap blankets or shawls. The labels on the items will say they are “provided with love by the Calgary Jewish community.”

Jewish Family Service Calgary and the Calgary Jewish

Federation have stepped in with some funding for the project, although it is expected that the hand-crafted versions will be donated by their creators.

“We estimate that there may be as many as 300 members of the community who might appreciate this type of gift,” says Sari. “Many of them are isolated and don’t get out very much. This is an aspect of bikur cholim that everyone can contribute to.”

It has been especially relevant during these COVID times, when many feel especially isolated and alone. Long-term care residents are only allowed one half-hour outdoor visit a week with a single loved one!

Here is a response from a pleased recipient: “I can’t quite give enough thanks for my gorgeous throw from



Examples of the handi-work created by the Shawl-Om project for distribution to members of the community.



Shawl-Om. The incredible workmanship that went into producing this colourful and useful handmade throw greatly cheers me every day I use it. The Calgary Jewish Community is a caring lot! Keep up the great work.”

If you know anyone who would appreciate a shawl or blanket, please contact Sari Shernofsky at 403-830-5920.

For more information contact Michele Doctoroff at 403-238-2919 or switzert@telus.net.

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Holocaust Symposium

Cont. from page 2

During the Q and A that followed Abella's address, a teacher from a nearby rural school told the audience how moved she was when she attended Symposium and heard the testimony of a woman who had hidden in the forest.

"Suddenly Fanny Wedro jumped up and identified herself as that woman," Krygier Lapedes recalled.

So great was Wedro's impact, that the woman was now bringing her own high school students to Symposium. Similar stories are shared by a growing number of educators.

Former Calgary Jewish Federation Holocaust Education and Remembrance Co-Chair Eva Hoffman recalled one very emotional young lady who spoke with Survivor Bronia Cyngiser after hearing her personal testimony. A victim of abuse, the student revealed that she had been on the verge of suicide when she walked through the doors.

"She told Bronia that hearing what she went through and seeing how she overcame it, she knew she would be able to get through her own problems. She derived strength from what Bronia said," recalled Hoffman.

In addition to speaking at Symposium, Survivors like Bronia and her husband, Sid Cyngiser, have frequently shared their stories with students in sessions at their schools or at the JCC.

When Darrell Ingeveld's Sundre High School class came to Calgary to hear Sid Cyngiser speak, he was so inspired by Cyngiser's testimony that he asked if he would pose for a photo with him. Cyngiser agreed, asking the young man to send him a copy.

Ingeveld – today in his mid-30s and living in Calgary – recently returned to his childhood home in Sundre. While sorting things there, he rediscovered the photo and felt compelled to reach out.

That took some doing. While he had vivid recollections of a Survivor named Sid, and his story, Ingeveld no longer recalled Sid's surname. After a Google search and some phone calls, he was finally able to connect.

Cyngiser couldn't believe his eyes when he received the photo in the mail. Ingeveld's inscription on the back read: "Our High School visited the JCC in 2002 and Sid asked me for a copy. 18 years later, here we are."

What Ingeveld remembers and admires most is how Cyngiser overcame the loss of his entire family, built a family and succeeded in business.

"He has lived a long, productive life despite having those challenges," said Ingeveld who marvels that Cyngiser's message is one of resiliency and hope rather than bitterness or revenge.

Deeply moved by Ingeveld's efforts to reach out, the Cyngisers look forward to meeting with him once it is safe to do so.

"I want to be able to shake his hand," Sid Cyngiser said.

When the 2020 Holocaust Symposium was sidelined by the pandemic, Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin worked quickly with Federation staff to provide online resources to teachers.

Bondar had already been telling her Babi Freda's story at Symposium and in classrooms for five years, having embraced that sacred task when her grandmother was no longer able.

A videotaped version of Bondar's presentation, including clips from Freda's videotaped testimony and an introduction by Calgary Jewish Federation staffer Diana Kalef, was offered to schools that had registered for Symposium. Bondar then went the extra mile, offering online Q and A sessions.

Each the granddaughter of four Holocaust survivors, Bondar and Libin are proud to be at the vanguard of a third generation devoted to preserving the memories of the murdered and the legacy of Survivors.

"Marnie and I are both in awe of our grandparents, what they overcame and how they built lives and moved forward," Libin said.

She and Bondar recently discovered an early videotape containing the testimonies of sisters Fay Kifer, Elizabeth Ksienski and Sima Herman. It is a rare treasure, they say, given the unusual circumstance of three sisters having survived the Shoah together.

To ensure that these and other stories are widely shared, Bondar and Libin are currently engaged in the creation of a digital library.

The Second Voices project, initiated under the watch of Ilana Krygier Lapedes, is now also in the capable hands of Bondar and Libin. The project – supported by two grants from the Alberta Human Rights Commission – arose from a simple question, says former Calgary Jewish Federation Associate Executive Director Judy Shapiro:

"How do we continue to tell Holocaust survivors' stories when there are no longer Holocaust survivors to tell their stories?"

In addition to Bondar's presentation, there are now four more Second Voices presentations in which children or other close relatives tell their loved ones'

stories of survival.

Additional Second Voices presentations are planned. Shapiro is currently writing a script that tells the story of the late Oscar Kirschner – a Survivor with no direct descendants – ensuring that those who knew and loved him can continue sharing his testimony.

While nothing can ever truly replace the living presence of Holocaust survivors, the voices of their second and third generation descendants are proving very effective and add a unique perspective – what it is like to be raised by a Survivor.

Shapiro recalls one Second Generation speaker describing to students how it felt to be frequently awoken in the night by the screams of his father who relived his trauma in vivid nightmares.

Afterwards, a student whose family had immigrated to Canada from Rwanda told the speaker that she always wondered whether that kind of terrifying experience happened only to her.

Bronia and Sid Cyngiser are among a dwindling number of Calgary Holocaust Survivors who continue to share their stories when possible.

Sid, who is 96 years young, told *Alberta Jewish News* that he plans to speak for four more years.

"One hundred seems like a good time to retire," he said.

The Cyngisers take comfort in knowing that when that day comes their grandchildren will continue to share their story in both Calgary and Edmonton as part of the Second Voices project.

A new initiative spearheaded by Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin will soon allow Calgarians to "...see the faces of those whose stories must be heard and never forgotten." The duo is currently coordinating a photo exhibit featuring images of survivors both living and deceased. Accompanying the photos will be brief descriptions of each survivor's experience together with their words of wisdom or, in some cases, those of their descendants.

The project speaks to the hearts of a whole new generation.

"It is the grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors that are really stepping up to the plate. The resurgence of interest is beautiful to see," Bondar says adding that her peers are coming forward with gifts or gifts in kind to stretch available resources and ensure that Holocaust Survivors continue to be seen and heard in perpetuity.

The world needs those voices, perhaps now more than ever. After all, there is a disease more virulent and deadly than coronavirus. Ideologies of hatred continue to threaten millions of people around the globe. Like COVID-19, the contagion can be found anywhere and there are no borders.



Holocaust survivor Fania Wedro with a group of students during a pre-Covid Calgary Holocaust Education Symposium. (File photo).

Fortunately, there is an antidote.

May the legacy of Holocaust Survivors – and those who follow in their footsteps – continue to inspire students, compelling them to speak out when they encounter racism and antisemitism, to practice good citizenship, and to always, always bear witness.

Holocaust Survivors and descendants who wish to participate in the photo exhibit honouring Survivors are asked to contact Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin at holocaustedu@jewishcalgary.org. For more information about this and other Calgary Jewish Federation Holocaust and Human Rights Education and Commemoration initiatives, go to www.jewishcalgary.org/our-community/federation-programs/holocaust-and-human-rights-commemoration-and-education.

Maxine Fischbein is a local journalism initiative reporter for Alberta Jewish News.

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Advice for anxious parents as Jewish Day Schools reopen

By Maxine Fischbein

Calgary Psychiatrist Dr. Allan Donsky says it is a given that some parents struggle more than others with the decision about whether they will send their children back to school amidst the Coronavirus Pandemic.

"There is no one right answer," says Donsky who says that each family must decide which path is the best one for them.

Donsky feels for parents as they seek to navigate and tolerate the opposing tensions caused by COVID. On the one hand they are protecting the health of their children; on the other, they worry about the academic, social and mental health ramifications of choosing to keep their kids at home.

Everything is exacerbated by incomplete and rapidly changing information about the virus and the responses to it by authorities they don't always trust.

"We don't even know what we don't know yet," says Donsky.

"Whenever we think about the future, there is always some uncertainty . . . and nervousness. We now have this heightened awareness because there is this virus out there."

"Each person's tolerance level is different. There is no one right way to do this," Donsky says.

Unfortunately, the choices have, themselves, become politicized making it even harder for parents to make difficult decisions.

"Contradictory messages from authorities aren't helping. There is no anchor here," Donsky says.

Donsky believes that parents are all on the same page in one regard; they want to keep their children healthy, body and soul.

"We have to keep vigilant even though we are fatigued," he says. "When we are fatigued, the brain wants to shut

down. We don't do our best thinking and lose our capacity to be wise."

What can result is a desperate choice between fight, flight and freeze impulses.

While much research suggests that it is important for kids to be back at school, just how damaging is it for kids whose parents opt to keep them at home?

We don't fully know the answer to that question, says Donsky.

"Kids are more resilient than we sometimes think they are. They make do . . . The really young kids don't know what they're missing."

There is perspective to be found in our people's history.

"As Jews, we've been displaced, and worse. We've made it and survived," adds Donsky.

Of course, much depends on the dynamics of each family and the personality of each child.

"Introverts are having a great time and the extroverts don't know what to do with themselves," notes Donsky.

There are positives where the pandemic is concerned if we choose to recognize and embrace them.

"This is a chance for parents to decouple from technology and get creative," says Donsky, who encourages parents to see this time of uncertainty as an opportunity to help their kids develop what he says are "important life skills like flexibility and adaptability as opposed to rigidity," helping to inculcate an outlook on life that helps kids learn how to bend rather than break.

He adds that on a societal level, there is a major silver lining.

"There is a great awakening going on here," Donsky says, as many recognize that we are "one big family" and "all in it together."

For parents who are worried that their children may fall behind academically due to the disruption caused by COVID, Donsky urges calm.

"The academics are going to come," says Donsky, who wants parents to cut themselves and others some slack.

"Everyone has to be flexible, adaptable, human and reasonable about this. Nobody is getting a call from the truancy officer."

"Expectations can, and probably should, in some ways drop," adds Donsky. "Parents don't need to panic. We are all in this together including the schools. They are modifying what they are doing too."

As Alberta students head back to school, Donsky suggests that kids in Jewish day schools enjoy some important advantages.

"Resiliency is the capacity to weather a storm and a big part of resiliency is the capacity to access what you need," he says, adding that parents who have their children in Jewish day schools are by definition part of a caring community equipped to provide shelter in that storm.

"Communities can be resilient," he says, noting that our Jewish communities have built-in advantages including schools, subsidy systems, and social services like those provided by Jewish Family Services.

"Do kids need to learn and socialize at school?"

Yes, says Donsky, "but kids can also learn online."

"Teenagers are currently getting therapy online and the results are very good. It can work the same way with education."

Donsky suggests that during this time of contagion, it is especially helpful to concentrate on what he calls SPK. SLOW down, be PATIENT, show KINDNESS and compassion for yourself and others.

"Navigating the unknown is about perspective," Donsky says. "Uncertain waters... that's all this is."

Maxine Fischbein is a local journalism initiative reporter for Alberta Jewish News.



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