

## November 3, 2020

The recent announcement has caused a wave of concern and discussion among families in the Edmonton Jewish community. *Alberta Jewish News* will follow this story to see how the community can accommodate the closure.

# Jewish Calgary celebrates

Cont. from page 1

incorporated many years later during the tenure of his successor, Drew Staffenberg.

“[The Foundation] was something that needed to happen,” recalls Joffe. “People who were very active in the community were not going to be around forever. We wanted to give them an opportunity to leave a legacy.”

Meanwhile, another idea was brought to Hal Joffe by his cousin, Jay Joffe z”l – the establishment of a Jewish historical society.

Having previously attended a meeting of the Southern Alberta Pioneers and their Descendants, Jay had been surprised and pleased to see a photo of Jacob Diamond on the wall of that organization’s log cabin and to learn that this Jewish man – his own Grandfather – was considered a pioneer.

Jay took a deep dive into that organization, ascending to its presidency.

“Jay never joined an organization that he didn’t plunge into after the second meeting,” recalls his widow, Barb Joffe. “It really bothered him that Jews didn’t think of themselves as pioneers.”

“Jay was absolutely crazy about the institution of a historical society,” recalls Hal Joffe, adding that for anything good to happen, you need the people who are “meshugah l’davar” – crazy for the idea.”

“He was relentless,” Hal Joffe said. “If you look at our institutions, nothing ever got built without people being that driven.”

Hal recalls that Jay at first felt it was the responsibility of Community Council to establish and conduct a Jewish historical society.

“As good an idea as that was, those were years when the community had other pressures,” recalls Hal.

“We were trying to get Jewish people out of the Soviet Union and helping Israel to rescue Ethiopian Jews. These were expensive propositions, especially for a community of our size,” added Hal, emphasizing that this was the kind of initiative that proved the urgency of raising endowment funds.


Tenacious as Jay was, Community Council could only offer some staff time, office space and moral support.

“So Jay went out and built it, which, in the long run, was a better thing,” Hal Joffe said.

The JHSSA was incorporated on July 4, 1990 with Jay Joffe as president.

Meanwhile, the JCFC was taking root.

“We knew what the goal was, but it took a while in terms of how to set it up,” recalls Cohos. “At first, it was like amateur night at the Bijoux, but it solidified over the years.”



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Milton Bogoch, who served as president of the Foundation between 2001 and 2011, can attest to that.

“I am immensely proud of how it’s grown,” said Bogoch who recalls that JCFC assets doubled from \$3 million to \$6 million dollars during his presidency.

“In the process of listening to donors, we made ourselves more worthy,” Bogoch said.

Like Cohos, Bogoch lauds the work of those who succeeded them. “Those who have come later have done a fantastic job of raising the standards higher and higher,” Bogoch said.

JCFC leaders have included chairs Donna Riback z”l, Robert Kalef, Sam Switzer, Bettina Liverant Zeisler and Stuart Myron and executive director Morris Bleviss.

Similarly, the JHSSA has raised its bar.

“It’s truly amazing that in 30 years so much has been accomplished,” says current JHSSA president Sandra Lipton, who expresses awe about the strides made by Jay Joffe and a long list of dedicated volunteers, including former presidents Sheldon Smithens, Jack Switzer and Betty Sherwood.

The Society produced research tools, programs, exhibits and publications including the JHSSA’s popular journal *Discovery*, distributed for free to the community. Major undertakings included two exhibits that led to the highly popular books, *Land of Promise* and *A Joyful Harvest*.

“It really reflects a huge dedication from so many members of our community to recording and representing our history. In the early years almost all of it was volunteer work,” Lipton said.

Lipton is grateful for what she calls the “continuity of support” by volunteers, sponsors and donors including people like Bertha Gold z”l, who collected oral histories, resident historian Jack Switzer z”l, and long-serving board member Manny Cohen z”l, who passed away shortly before the Society’s 30th anniversary. She also points with pride to cross-generational support of the JHSSA. Examples include inaugural *Discovery* editor Sid Macklin z”l, whose daughter, Halley Girvitz, serves on the Board of Directors, and early JHSSA staffer Naomi Kerr whose daughter, Roberta Kerr, is the archivist.

Former and long-serving archivist Agi Romer Segal underscores the significance of the organization.

“It defines the community and validates that it has a claim. Putting down roots gives us a stake,” Romer Segal says.

The Historical Society plays an important role within and beyond the Jewish community and is a respected source for researchers.

“A more balanced picture emerges when you record the community history,” notes Romer Segal, adding that the community relies on this.

“I know this because all the organizations come to us when they have their anniversaries,” said Romer Segal who has often helped them to piece together their own histories.

Building up communal trust has been critical to the success of both the JHSSA and the JCFC. The JHSSA had to prove its credentials when it came to collecting and preserving the precious photos and archives that tell the story of Jews in Calgary and Southern Alberta.

At first, says Romer Segal, JHSSA was “...an historical society with archives.”

“Now we are running as we should be,” adds Romer Segal, characterizing the operation as a “responsible repository” where people can share their oral histories and donate photos, letters and other precious documents

knowing that they will be stored and cared for with the highest archival standards.

“Jay’s dream has grown into a professional institution,” Romer Segal says.

That kind of good stewardship also goes to the very heart of the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary’s mandate... a critical thing when it comes to dealing with what Milton Bogoch calls “OPM -- other people’s money.”

“I take pride in the trust that community members have placed in the JCFC,” echoes current Chair Stuart Myron. “That trust has led to the increased generosity of a growing number of fund holders and their passion to ensure a strong and vibrant Calgary Jewish community.”

“Our total assets under management now exceed \$20 million and successive JCFC leaders have improved our governance and professionalism while increasing community impact. Our By-Laws and policies align with current standards and are reviewed by our Board of Directors regularly and our processes for monitoring the performance of investment managers is robust and sophisticated,” says Myron, on whose watch JCFC assets have tripled from \$6.7 million to \$20.3 million.

“Since the establishment of the JCFC in 1990, we have granted nearly \$5.8 million in support of Jewish organizations,” Myron said.

“It was an overnight success that took 30 years,” quips Hal Joffe.

But when you take the historical view, it happened in the blink of an eye.

The 30th anniversaries of the JCFC and JHSSA were marked online during October AGMs held just two days apart – a fitting symbol of their interrelatedness.

While one of them preserves, protects and shares the past, the other grows the philanthropic means that will allow for the continued unfolding of Jewish life in Calgary.

The trajectory of that story depends on all of us. History is not made only by the famous; nor is philanthropy the sole domain of the wealthy.

Sandra Lipton urges all community members to think of the JHSSA when they are cleaning up homes and deciding what to do with old papers and photos that can help flesh out the collective story of Jewish life in Southern Alberta. Even tiny details of everyday life provide clues to a proud past, says Lipton.

For its part, the JCFC is educating the community that you don’t have to be a Rockefeller to open a fund and lend financial support to current initiatives or to give an after-lifetime gift that will support Jewish Calgary in perpetuity. That is why the JCFC has teamed up with Calgary Jewish Federation to bring the Harold Grinspoon Foundation’s LIFE & LEGACY program to Calgary.

The JHSSA is one of 10 local Jewish organizations seeking LIFE & LEGACY gifts from donors who wish to support charitable organizations and causes in perpetuity through vehicles like bequests and insurance policies.

“In the first 15 months of the four year program, 350 letters of intent have been garnered by our local partners with an estimated future value of \$13 million,” says Stuart Myron. “The vigorous response gives me optimism for the future of the JCFC and the Jewish community.”

Indeed, the best is yet unwritten.

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

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# New initiatives at Calgary’s Halpern Akiva Academy



Mrs. Vendekkan

Since Halpern Akiva Academy’s inception 40 years ago, it has always looked for ways to stay relevant and pivot with the changing needs of students in the community, while retaining its focus on Academic Excellence with a Love of Torah. Most recently, these new challenges have brought a full-featured STEM Lab to Akiva, the introduction of the

Renert Brightminds math curriculum, as well as a new Montessori-inspired preschool and daycare program.

We spoke with Mrs. Kizhakke Vendekkan, Daycare Director of Halpern Akiva Academy to learn more about the Montessori program.

Mrs. Vendekkan (or Mrs. V. as the students call her) has been the Daycare Director at Halpern Akiva Academy since 2017. She has a Bachelors of Education and a Masters in Mathematics, and has a Montessori Certificate, as well as a Child Development Supervisor Certificate.

Her teaching goals include sharing her love for teaching and guiding children while providing a fun and creative environment. She is a passionate Montessori educator who is always looking to perform at the highest standards. She respects children’s rights at all levels.

Montessori is a method of teaching that is based on self-directed activity, hands-on learning, and collaborative play. The Montessori approach to education is based on the work and research of Dr. Maria Montessori. It provides students a carefully planned, stimulating environment that helps them develop an excellent foundation for learning and leadership.

The daycare and preschool have now incorporated five key areas of learning which make up the Montessori elements: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, and Culture.

We asked Mrs. V what she sees as the benefits of the Montessori Program.



Students at Calgary’s Halpern Akiva Academy enjoying classroom activities.

“As a Montessori teacher and parent, I can honestly say that I fell in love with Montessori at first sight. Over the years, I’ve watched my own son benefit in so many ways because of his educational experiences. His love for learning, academic abilities, compassion and self motivation are all qualities he’s attained from this superb form of learning.”

Mrs. V. explained that Montessori has several special approaches to learning:

“Fostering independence - Everything about a Montessori classroom fosters independence. You first start with the classroom that is prepared to allow the child to do for themselves what an adult would often do for a child. Enter a room and you will watch a three-year-old sweeping the floor with a child-sized broom, cleaning a mirror or folding washcloths that are the right size for their hands. The pride you see in these children who are able to “do it themselves” without asking for help from an adult is incredible!

“Creating a sense of order - All objects and activities have precise locations on the shelves of a Montessori classroom. When children are finished with an activity, they place items back into their appropriate places. This sense of order helps facilitate the learning process, teaches self-discipline, and caters to a young child’s innate need for an orderly environment. When children work and play in an area that is neat and predictable, they can unleash their creativity and focus fully on the learning process.

This sense of order is especially needed now when there is so much change in the world.

“Hands-on learning - One of the greatest benefits of the Montessori Method, particularly during the early learning experiences, is the focus on hands-on learning. The emphasis is on concrete, rather than abstract learning, as students work on activities that teach language, math, culture, and practical life lessons. Teachers encourage students to focus on activities until they are properly mastered, rather than rushing them to another activity.”

Leah Moldofsky and her 3-year old daughter Bluma are new to Halpern Akiva Academy. Bluma loves coming to school and is happy to engage in the various Montessori activities. Her grandmother Nechama has been a teacher for many decades and says, “As a teacher I notice how kids engage in play. When I look at Bluma, I see a happy child involved in the activity the way it’s meant to be used. I see toys that are colourful, fun, large-sized and sturdily constructed. The children are engaging in intellectually stimulating activities that also target fine motor coordination, math skills, and logical deduction.”

Mrs. Vendekkan is already seeing positive learning outcomes in her class – children are showing more independence, coordination, and confidence. She is also seeing more cooperation among peers and more children caring about social responsibility. She is excited to see the growth in the children as the school year unfolds.

May the candles of Chanukah fill  
your home with light!

# Happy Chanukah!

# HOJMI ushers in the New Year with spiritual fervour

By Gary Wolf

The year 2020 has been an historic year. As the world looks to turn a new chapter on a challenging few months, a new Jewish year, 5781, was rung in with much spiritual fervour at Calgary’s own House of Jacob Mikveh Israel (HOJMI). The 110 year old congregation, whose original congregants faced challenges of wars and pandemics, was a fitting place to unite in prayer for a brighter tomorrow.

Hosting High Holiday services at HOJMI was not without challenges. The first challenge was determining who would lead services. For the past 10 years Rabbi Dorfman from New York had travelled from New York to lead 200 plus congregants in prayer. Border closures held back this treasured Cantor from performing for this new year. The stellar voice and wonderful melodies of Rabbi Dorfman was not to be for the seventy HOJMI members who attended services. The famous saying, “Man plans and G-d laughs” was playing itself out.

Fortunately for the community, there was a wealth of talent to tap into. Calgary Kollel’s Rabbi Safren was tapped to lead large sections of the Rosh Hashonah and Yomi Kippur services. Rabbi Safren treated the Shul to a stirring rendition of traditional and Carlebach melodies. Rabbi Goldenberg, from Halpern Akiva Academy, in his peaceful, gentle and devotional style made up part of the cantorial team as well. Those in attendance praised the dynamic cantorial duo for delivering a meaningful service to everyone.

“HOJMI did a great job treating its members to a wonderful service. To have been able to open our doors for services, and do so in a safe way, is a testament to the strength of this community,” said HOJMI co-president David Silver. “The stage has been set for a good year ahead of us.”

Many people came together to make the services run smoothly. HOJMI salutes long time service coordinator, Dr. Eliezer Segal, for his continued display of professionalism. Vice President Michael Berlin led a team of ushers that welcomed all congregants to the building in his pleasant and sweet way. Continued praise was expressed for HOJMI’s newly installed Rabbi, Binyomin Halpern, for being a guiding light to many. Rabbi Halpern’s messages of hope and inspiration were received well by those in the sanctuary, and those who met up with him after services.

“Personally, I find it very rewarding to be able to showcase the local talent that we are privileged to have access to every day of the year not just three days a year,” said a long time HOJMI congregant.

The cooperation of the congregants in terms of physical distance, face covering and hand cleaning made it very easy to navigate the pews of the sanctuary. The hope for HOJMI, and for all synagogues, is that current day public health restrictions will soon no longer be required. Nevertheless; HOJMI has shown itself able to meet the needs of Calgary’s Jewish community should today’s situation continue, G-d forbid, for an extended period of time.

# Proposed Alberta curriculum is cause for concern

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A series of proposals for Alberta’s K-4 social studies curriculum leaked to the CBC have been roundly criticized by experts for downplaying the horrors of residential schools while emphasizing tenets of Christianity, in addition to relying on outdated educational philosophies.

Keith Barton, an education professor at Indiana University, said adopting the new proposals would make Alberta a “laughingstock”, while University of Alberta education professor Carla Peck said “it would be embarrassing.”

During last year’s election, the UCP vowed to order a re-do of the updated K-12 curriculum that was in the process of being piloted, which they claimed was riddled with political bias.

The proposals suggest deferring teaching students about residential schools until the kids are “more mature and are less emotionally vulnerable to traumatic material.” However, the document proposes teaching residential schools as one example of “harsh schooling” in Grade 9.

In Grade 1, kids will learn about the “three great religions that worship one G-d” — Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

“All three are built on the idea that G-d revealed himself to humans (‘revelation’) who have the capacity to discover the truth about Him,” the draft reads.

The draft was written by a 17-member panel appointed by the government and includes controversial history writer, and former staffer to Premier Jason Kenney when he was a minister in Ottawa, Chris Champion. Champion once called the push to incorporate more Indigenous perspectives in curriculum an “ongoing fad”.

In the Grade 3 section, the draft says it has removed references to ‘equity’, because it’s “probably a politically partisan and charged buzzword.”

University of Alberta education professor Dwayne Donald, who’s from the Papachase Cree Nation, says it’s troubling that “these kinds of experts” were consulted on the curriculum, the contents of which he described as “racist.”

Donald was also harsh in his criticism of what he says is the draft’s antiquated approach to learning, with its emphasis on memorization, which he said should be of concern to anyone with children in the public education system.

“Really, what it does, is it takes the complexity of human experience and everything we’ve learned about teaching and learning, and flattens it,” he told the *Red Deer Advocate*.

“Children are framed as these empty vessels that need to be filled up with facts and dates. There’s no allowance for understanding children as being pretty intelligent and able to express themselves in multiple ways. None of that is there.”

As early as Grade 1, students would learn about Creation, reading biblical verses as poetry, while teaching Grade 4 students that most non-white Albertans, which it identifies as those from China, Japan, South Korea and the Philippine’s, are Christian.

In a section on teaching Grade 3 students about the Judeo-Christian, First Nations, Métis and Inuit traditions, it says FNMI cultures “are often themselves influenced by Christian social teaching.”

For Grade 4, the draft proposes teaching “how Christian marriage differed from Roman marriage; e.g. women kept their maiden name in the Middle Ages (sic).”

A section on teaching Grade 1 kids about land has a segment that is crossed out on using oral history, stories and agriculture, in addition to teaching about sustainability and different ways of using land. Whoever crossed it out writes that it “sounds like mysticism.”

“One could equally say ‘water sustains everything’, or ‘the fire of the Sun’, or ‘Oxygen’, or ‘the Holy Ghost’,” they wrote. “All would be true in their way.”

Although the Indigenous community criticized the leaked proposals, there were no public comments expressing concern from the non-Christian community in Alberta.

“I’m surprised that there has not been an outcry from the Alberta Jewish community regarding the proposed infusion of religious teachings into the Alberta curriculum,” says *AJNews* publisher Deborah Shatz.

“It seems sadly ironic that while the curricular proposals are minimizing the education of Alberta’s students about the horrors of Indian Residential Schools, they are at the same introducing more religious dogma.”

Education Minister Adriana LaGrange said the draft merely contains recommendations, not all of which will be ultimately adopted, emphasizing that teaching about residential schools is “non-negotiable. Advice is advice — it’s not final,” said LaGrange, who also acknowledged some of the proposals “aren’t even realistic.”

Leader of Opposition Rachel Notley called on the government to disband the panel that wrote the draft. “Whether it’s blending church and state or forcing children into rigid, outdated memorizing rituals, this government has selected advisers who want to take our education system backwards,” said Notley.

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Over the previous decades, many of you have grown up with our logo featuring three colours - blue, green, and brown. Blue for water, green for environmentalism, and brown for land. They defined JNF Canada's raison d'être. Together, we have contributed to Israel's successful rise from its once fragile state to a technological and environmental light among nations.

As Israel has developed, JNF Canada has also evolved. Building on our environmental mission, we have also identified the need to address the lack of charitable social service infrastructure for the people of Israel to survive and thrive.

WHY DID JNF CANADA REDESIGN ITS LOGO?

We did more than just redesign our logo. Guided by the consultants at Blueprint, we spent many months reflecting on who we are and what our core proposition was to our supporters. What makes JNF Canada unique? Our answer is that JNF is the only Canadian charity that, together with our generous donors, are “*Building the Foundations for Israel's Future*.” We help build charitable projects that are essential to enhance and enrich the lives of Israel's citizens in every part of the country.

In every generation, Israel's needs change. In pre-statehood, the need was to purchase land for the early pioneers. After the state was established, there was a focus on forests, gardens, and lookouts. As the population grew, Israel experienced water shortages so reservoirs were required. These needs have been addressed, thanks in part to the success of our work. More recently, JNF Canada has become more involved in social infrastructure projects like community centres, playgrounds, rehabilitation facilities and youth centres. While our environmental mission will remain a priority, we are excited to also support these vitally important social service needs, in collaboration with a variety of agencies and charitable organizations.

The new JNF Canada logo is not a rejection of the past, rather we embrace it. The values at the core of JNF Canada have not changed. The key message of our new visual identity is that we are forward-looking, dynamic, creative, and modern while respecting our beautiful past. We are inspired by the founder of modern Zionism, Theodore Herzl, who dreamed of an Old-New Land – Altneuland. JNF Canada will continue to honour the values and traditions of our past as we turn our eyes forward to building the foundations of Israel's future, together.

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Our new logo is made up of an icon and uses the acronym JNF. This reflects how most people inside and outside the organization colloquially refer to us. We will still use Jewish National Fund of Canada on formal and legal documents.

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The Colours

JNF Canada's new visual identity conveys Israel through the use of blues and white. The focus of our work is exclusively directed toward Israel and no two colours exemplify Israel more than these.

The Blue Box (Pushke)

Made up of the four pillars and the coin slot above, this modern representation of the Blue Box is a powerful symbol of JNF Canada's long fundraising history and the enduring support of our donors.

The Pillars

The four pillars represent strength and upward growth. This will also be used in our design system to represent buildings, as a core element of our brand “Building Israel Together”.

The Leaf

We replaced the tree from our previous logo with a young leaf sprouting from a branch. It is a nod to our environmental history, our ongoing commitment to environmental projects, regeneration, and new beginnings. We have been connecting Canadians to Israel for decades, but still perceive ourselves as young and dynamic.

With the new branding also comes a revitalized approach to fundraising and many exciting and meaningful building project opportunities. We look forward to sharing these (and more of our new look) with you in the coming months!

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# How a Holocaust survivor built one of Calgary’s best multi-residential developments

By Irena Karshenbaum



Peter Caspari c.1968. Photo courtesy: Dr. David Caspari.

There is an irony that when Europe went mad with hatred in the middle decades of the 20th century, the lands that took in Jewish refugees reaped the kinds of rewards they may never fully understand.

One such example — among many — is the case of Rideau Towers, a multi-apartment development built on a barren escarpment, in the southwest quadrant of Calgary, overlooking the Elbow River and downtown. The towers were built by Peter Caspari, a Holocaust survivor.

It also happens to be where I have lived for most of my adult life.

Earlier in 2020, Rideau Towers were added to the Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources (IEHR), a list administered by Heritage Calgary that researches and assesses important heritage buildings, and recommends to City Council they be included on the list.

The IEHR states that Rideau Towers are, “an exquisitely designed International-style multi-residential tower complex,” and “an icon of the shift in post-War Calgary towards luxury high-rise living.” It adds it is also significant for its construction technique being the earliest and largest building to utilize a suspended lift slab technology in the city.

The IEHR describes the towers featuring flat roofs, rectangular massing with red brick cladding, and continuous slab balconies. The design was ultra-modern for its day and unique to Calgary. It was an aesthetic Caspari parachuted into the city while working simultaneously on another project, Toronto’s City Park Apartments.

The plans for the City Park Apartments, Toronto’s first modern, multi-building apartment complex were first unveiled in 1952 and had an initial vision of four, 15-storey towers.

In the April, 1957 issue of *Royal Architecture Institute of Canada (RAIC) Journal*, Caspari describes the final project, completed in 1956 and which was scaled down to three 14-floor towers. “This allowed better light use and larger landscaped areas between the buildings.” The same spacing ideas were used in the Rideau Towers development.

Located on Church Street, Caspari continues, “Garage doors are power-operated by electric eye impulses broken through cars passing the ray. The structural system chosen was a combination of a reinforced concrete frame with poured reinforced concrete. Access to the buildings is obtained by remote control of doors between vestibules and apartments, and a two-way speaker system is provided from vestibules to apartments.”

Caspari’s description of City Park Apartments rings almost identical to Rideau Towers.

According to an August, 2017 article in *SpacingToronto* magazine, Caspari’s completed Toronto development was met with great acclaim, even landing on the pages of UK’s *Sunday Times* and *Der Bund*, a Swiss German-language newspaper.

Seeing the 1956 RAIC photos with only Rutland House, it is likely Devonshire, Cumberland and Renfrew Houses, located on Rideau Place, were not completed until 1957. The last two proposed towers were never built. Instead in 1976, townhouses were constructed on the vacant land.

As the years went by, trees grew, a pool was built on the northern point overlooking the growing skyline and another pool was added at the southern entrance into the property. A hair salon has been in Rutland House for decades and IEHR lists Rideau Towers Restaurant serving the community from 1961 to around 1967.



Rideau Towers: in Calgary l. to r. Rutland House, Cumberland House, and Renfrew House. Photo by Irena Karshenbaum.

Many people have shared stories with me that their grandmother or own family once lived here. One summer evening a few years ago, a neighbour and I decided to flip through a 1962 *Calgary and District Telephone Directory* that I happen to own. We both gasped when we saw that my neighbour’s aunt, A Pearlman, lived at 403 Cumberland House, exactly two floors above where he was living. In picking other well-known Jewish names out of a metaphorical hat: Norman Libin lived at 704 Devonshire House, W Belzberg at 703 Cumberland House and Harry Libin at 708 Renfrew House, directly above me. The 1962 directory confirms Rideau Towers Restaurant was at 108 Rutland House and Rideau Towers Confectionary Store was at 107 Rutland House and adds Rideau Towers Bridge Studio at 108 Renfrew House. (What is a bridge studio?)

I was first introduced to Rideau Towers in 1995 by a friend who had the cutest apartment, I thought, in Devonshire House. In 1997, I moved into my own cozy place, in Rutland House. On summer evenings, I would walk in my bathrobe — I was not the only person to *shlep* through the cul-de-sac in a bathrobe! — and relax in the hot tub at the south pool while gazing at the surrounding trees and feeling the day’s stress vanish in the fragrant evening air. In 2005, I moved into another unit, with an unobstructed view of the downtown, in Renfrew House. I have loved living in my charming place with its European aesthetic since.

Where would the generations of people be, who have had the privilege to live in Rideau Towers, were it not for the daring of Peter Caspari?

Continued on page 16

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This month's update from Edmonton Talmud Torah School



It has been a very busy month at Edmonton's Talmud Torah School. Pictured above: Grade 1 students learn with their individual STEM buckets. Due to COVID restrictions, where no food can be given to students, this school year Talmud Torah Society has been providing challah buns to its K to 6 school community through a pick up program every couple of months. Students then bring their challah bun to school every Friday to celebrate Shabbat. Our students love our new touchless water stations funded by a grant from the Sam Ousher Switzer Foundation. The breathable masks with our TT lion logo, Stronger Together, are from casino funds.

JCC Victoria raises awareness

On November 19, 2020 at 10 am PST, the Jewish Community Centre of Victoria will host a special Webinar dedicated to Nature Israel (Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel – SPNI) and the organization's role in addressing Israel's environmental challenges.

This virtual program will be of great interest to individuals and families who have a connection to Israel and who wish to learn more about the work SPNI is doing, outside the realm of political discourse, to ensure the longevity of Israel's land and natural resources for generations to come.

SPNI is Israel's largest environmental organization. For over 60 years SPNI has been dedicated to protecting and preserving Israel's natural resources, environment, natural assets and unique landscape. The work carried out by SPNI now will determine what the land of Israel will look like for generations to come.

The Canadian Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (CSPNI) is a Canadian Registered Charity (reg. #811512680). CSPNI's mission is to raise awareness, and funds for, the work of SPNI to protect and preserve Israel. CSPNI is pleased to lend support to this program through the creation of this partnership with JCC Victoria, in support of SPNI's work.

This special virtual program will be led by Jay Shofet, Director of Partnerships and Development at SPNI, and will highlight the programs run by SPNI to protect and preserve Israel's fragile ecosystem and valuable resources.

Jay will trace the growth of Israel's environmental movement. Then, he'll give a snapshot of where things stand today: how a new ethos of dense, sustainable cities is slowly developing; how land use planning affects everything; how the push for renewable energy is fighting against entrenched economic interests and old infrastructure; and how Israel's world-class biodiversity is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation -- and what SPNI is doing about it.

For more information please contact: [jccv@telus.net](mailto:jccv@telus.net) or [info@cspni.ca](mailto:info@cspni.ca)



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## community calendar

Want to know what's going on in Jewish Calgary?  
Check out the Community Calendar at [jewishcalgary.org](http://jewishcalgary.org)

Have an event?  
Click on "Suggest an Event" to add it to the calendar



### A MESSAGE FROM ADAM SILVER

The last few months have tested our community, along with others around the globe, in ways we never could have expected. The elapsed time has also seen us come together like never before, supporting one another and working toward a Jewish Calgary for tomorrow built on how we address the challenges of today. While the work is tiring and never ending, I am so incredibly proud of the volunteer and professional leaders with whom I continue to have the privilege to partner with.

It so happens that I am writing this message as Shabbat *Lech Lecha* approaches. Besides being my Bar Mitzvah Torah portion thirty-six years ago, it is an incredibly important story of direction, faith, and blessings. We learn of Avram, soon to become Avraham, who was told by G-d to "Go Forth," to have faith, and as reward he and his ancestors will be made a great nation. Avraham is also told he will be a blessing and his ancestors will be blessings to the world. I would like to focus on those three themes: *Lech Lecha* ("Go Forth"), faith, and being a blessing.

Avraham was given an opportunity that was presented as a commandment – "Go Forth," an instruction to move out of his comfort zone and to embark on a new

journey. He was promised great success and a lasting ancestral legacy. Avraham is told to leave his home and travel to "a place he does not know." He had to find the motivation and confidence to refrain from dwelling on the loss he might feel and the fear he might experience, instead focusing on the possibilities in front of him and the future he will be able to build.

To do so, Avraham needed to have a strong dose of faith. Likely, this meant religious faith, but an expanded definition would include spiritual drive and mental fitness. To heed the initial calling is one thing, but to persevere and follow through is quite another. Leaving on a new path for the unknown instead of staying in the comfortable familiarity of one's current situation is scary at best and terrifying at worst. Avraham ventured out on a bold new path without any certainty of success other than his will to make the trip and his faith in his ability to navigate the journey.

His reward, in part, is that he and his ancestors would be blessings. Not that they would receive blessings, but that they would be them. That is, blessings aren't simply received. We experience blessings so we can pay them forward, so we can share them. We find positive energy and reward in blessings, but they are only worth

something if others can also experience them with us.

The themes of *Lech Lecha* connect very well to our current reality of living through the COVID-19 pandemic. Our community and our families have had to be bold and "Go Forth," we've had to have faith and dedication to stewarding through some very challenging days. At the same time, we have been fortunate to experience some blessings – increased time with family and friends, a slowing of our daily pace, and the above-and-beyond efforts of many amazing people. A kind look, a text or call to see how we are doing, a package of food dropped on our front porch – these days have drawn out the very best in many people in our community.

Throughout all of this, we are only better if we work together. **Together, WE CAN** get through this. **Together, WE CAN** be caring. **Together, WE CAN** ensure tomorrow is even better than today!

B'Shalom,

Adam Silver, CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

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[kwainer@jewishcalgary.org](mailto:kwainer@jewishcalgary.org) or 403-537-8592

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# Major milestone at Edmonton Jewish Seniors Centre

By Maxine Fischbein

Jewish Edmonton is blessed by community professionals who elevate the organizations they serve. Often they come from within. Sometimes they come from a distance. Few have journeyed as far as Dr. Svetlana Pavlenko who this year celebrates 10 years as Executive Director of the Jewish Senior Citizens' Centre, better known as the Jewish Drop-in Centre (JDIC).

Pavlenko hails originally from Novosibirsk, Russia's third largest city. When she and her husband Eugene decided to immigrate to Canada, it was fortuitous that the Canadian government was promoting Edmonton.

With a PhD in Philosophy from the Novosibirsk State Technical University, where she served as an Associate Professor and Chair of Student Research, Pavlenko had an impressive resume. While at school, she was recruited by the Jewish Agency for Israel; as an assistant to the Youth Shaliach, she provided programming including summer camp for youth planning to make Aliyah. She later served as regional director for the Open University of Israel, helping individuals who were planning to immigrate to Israel begin their degrees.

Those professional roles were in Pavlenko's wheelhouse given that the main focus of her PhD had to do with social adaptation to new environments. She and her husband, Eugene, embraced the concept in a very personal way when they decided to explore opportunities in Canada.

Pavlenko was vastly overqualified for the "survival" job that she snapped up shortly after arriving in Edmonton. She worked for a while as a receptionist at a car dealership and quickly moved into sales where she proved successful.

"But it was not the job of my dreams," recalled Pavlenko, who creatively utilized her previous research and personal experience in pitching a program to Jewish Family Services that would help immigrant women achieve self-actualization professionally and personally in Edmonton.

JFS embraced Pavlenko's proposed program, *Transforming Acculturative Stress into Success*, which led to that organization's first-ever federal grant – and the hiring of Pavlenko as Project Manager.

"It was my first decent job in Canada," recalls Pavlenko adding that the methodology of the innovative project was emulated by other social service agencies within and beyond Edmonton following the presentation of a paper at the International Conference of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies in Los Angeles in 2010.

That was a big year for Pavlenko. While her program had been successful, the grant had wound down at the same time that the Jewish Senior Citizens' Centre was seeking its first-ever full-time Executive Director.

"It was a good match for me," recalls Pavlenko, who had enjoyed teaching seniors English as part of her role with JAFI in Russia.

Looking back, Pavlenko can hardly believe that a decade has passed since the Jewish Seniors' Centre hired her.

The organization had already served seniors for some 58 years, headed by dedicated volunteers, operational boards and a few part-time employees including Joyce Galante and Rosemary Kitay who served respectively as JDIC administrator and program director prior to Pavlenko's appointment. But times were changing. The City of Edmonton was developing a framework for seniors' centres and the JDIC board of directors was



Purim 2020 at the Seniors' Centre (before the COVID lock down) was a glorious event!

looking for someone who could bring the organization to a whole new level.

Under Pavlenko's leadership, programming was expanded from two days a week to five. The Centre opened its doors Sundays through Thursdays, sometimes adding additional programs like Shabbat dinners and outside activities ranging from symphony concerts to pole walking. The Shalom Club, a program instituted in 1982 to serve Jewish seniors who had emigrated from Russia, continued to thrive.

Over the years, Pavlenko has applied for numerous government grants that provided for programming and for the renovation of the JDIC – at a cost of over half a million dollars during the past decade – covering everything from furnaces to soap dispensers.

Pavlenko lauds the efforts of volunteers and community donors who also helped to make this happen through such initiatives as the "Raise the Roof" campaign spearheaded by Miriam Rabinovitch and Hal Simons, both of blessed memory.

"The community was very responsive and we were very grateful," recalls Pavlenko.

According to former JDIC Presidents Elaine and Mark Salke, Pavlenko's superpower is networking.

"She expanded the outreach of the Centre bringing new ideas and people," says Mark Salke.

"Apart from her intercultural outreach, she has brought a lot of music into the Centre," says Elaine Salke, including performances by the Alberta Opera and concerts by musicians of various genres.

"Svetlana finds people with skills and interests almost everywhere. She is able to establish connections and utilize their skills to the benefit of the Centre," adds Salke. "We are lucky to have her."

Two JDIC fundraising project that have been near and dear to Pavlenko's heart are the annual Bagel Loop walk, run and roll and a 2014 fundraising cookbook that brought favourite recipes from JDIC members to kitchens throughout Edmonton and beyond based on the much-loved culinary program *Cooking with Bubbie and Zaida*.

Resident chef Bozena Szopiak's iconic dill pickle soup recipe – a favourite among JDIC regulars – is featured in *Traditional to Modern Cooking: An Intergenerational Cookbook*, which also includes photos of JDIC members and guests and a history of the JDIC.

Food is, of course, a major draw. Prior to the COVID-19 lockdown, members enjoyed dairy vegetarian lunches at the JDIC. Due to COVID, the Centre has pivoted to takeout soups by advance order and plans are in the works to expand the menu to include entrees and desserts, Pavlenko says.

Pavlenko takes pride in an army of dedicated JDIC volunteers and talented service providers and friends like Szopiak – who has been cooking at the Centre for more than 20 years – and Ilonka



Edmonton Jewish Senior Citizens Centre Executive Director Svetlana Pavlenko.

Wormsbecker and Bonnie Austen who have taught exercise classes for 37 years and 13 years respectively.

"Till death do us part," chuckles Pavlenko.

"This is not an institution. We are a place where people are happy to be."

Much of that atmosphere has to do with Pavlenko's responsiveness to members' suggestions.

This has led to everything from Ikebana (Japanese flower arranging) classes to Elders Circles facilitated on principles found in Indigenous cultures. Youth from the Kyrgyz Association of Alberta have helped JDIC members to navigate technology . . . an increasingly important skill now that COVID has forced the Centre's activities online.

*Survival to Thrival: Shared Historical Experiences* – a series of lectures, discussions and activities funded in part by a government anti-racism grant – brought together Jewish and Indigenous individuals for an exploration of the effects of racism and oppression on each community and how they have maintained and celebrated their cultural heritage.

"We are quite unique," muses Pavlenko. "We pay a lot of attention to the intellectual stimulation of our members . . . bringing guest speakers of high calibre."

Such speakers have included former Liberal MP and Deputy Prime Minister of Canada the Honourable Anne McClellan, former Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel, and a number of professors from the University of Alberta.

Through the years the JDIC has initiated synergies with other local Jewish organizations. Children from the Talmud Torah and Menorah Academy have entertained or volunteered from time to time in the lunch program. Prior to COVID, the JDIC teamed up with Beth Shalom and Beth Israel in hosting, on a rotating basis, a community lunch following the annual Remembrance Day

Continued on page 13

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# Despite COVID, JFED’s new CEO will hit the ground running



New JFED CEO  
Stacey Leavitt-Wright.

By Maxine Fischbein

As the torch is passed by outgoing CEO Debby Shoctor to Stacey Leavitt-Wright, Jewish Federation of Edmonton has extended its practice of hiring from within the community, but with a difference says Federation President Steve Shafir.

After an extensive search yielding a total of 11 local, national and even international applications, Leavitt-Wright was the unanimous choice of Federation’s selection committee, comprised of Lisa Miller, David Eisenstat, Shea Pertman, Ram Romanovsky and Shafir.

“Wright was the right choice,” said Shafir.

The fact that Leavitt-Wright hails from elsewhere and has a long track record of Jewish engagement in other communities and in Edmonton – including knowledge of how Federation operates – provides the best of both worlds, Shafir told *AJNews*.

“Stacey is invested in Edmonton,” Shafir said.

When asked why she’s stepping into Jewish Edmonton’s top civil service position, Leavitt-Wright was unequivocal.

“Why wouldn’t I? I’ve always felt, since I was a kid, that you create the community you want to live in.”

There was some happenstance involved in her decision to apply. Leavitt-Wright and her husband had been looking forward to taking their three daughters to Israel during her husband’s long-planned sabbatical.

“I was looking to regroup, get some inspiration and figure out what my next steps would be, both career-wise and as a volunteer,” Leavitt-Wright said.

But COVID-19 derailed the adventure.

“The things that got me through were Israeli TV, Jewish cooking sites, Jewish engagement webinars and services online...This is all the stuff I’m passionate about and enjoy,” said Leavitt-Wright.

“All the roads have led me here. This is what I need to be doing,” she said of her new professional calling. Those roads include impressive educational credentials and career experience including a BComm in international businesses and an MA from Concordia University. She is a Myers-Briggs type certified trainer and has led workshops in leadership development and conflict management, “helping people to play nice together in the sandbox,” quips Leavitt-Wright of the qualification that will, no doubt, prove most useful in the Jewish civil service.

Leavitt-Wright sees Federation as the “umbrella that brings the community together,” adding that it is also

important to maintain the local community’s constant connection nationally and in Israel.

Growing up in Montreal it was easy to feel a part of the Jewish community, said Leavitt-Wright. “It was Judaism by osmosis...You could be Jewish just by showing up.”

Having since lived and volunteered in less populous Jewish communities, she is keenly aware that considerably more effort is required to sustain and enrich Jewish lives in smaller centres.

Leavitt-Wright’s formative Montreal Jewish experiences included summer camp and a high school social action group that led to volunteering at Maimonides Hospital, a home for Jewish seniors. Her first job was at the Auberge Shalom, a National Council of Jewish Women shelter for abused women.

Shortly after they married, Leavitt-Wright and her husband moved to London, Ontario which had a Jewish population of about 2,500. There, they began their family.

“We supported each other,” Leavitt-Wright recalls of the tightly-knit Jewish community.

Her first leadership role was at the London Community Hebrew Day School.

“I phoned the president to complain about something. Next thing I knew I was on the Board. That could be my tagline,” quips Leavitt-Wright. “Be prepared. If you’re going to call me with a complaint, you’re going to be on a committee.”

Leavitt-Wright went on to volunteer at Congregation Or Shalom – London’s Conservative Synagogue – where she served on the Rabbi Search Committee.

One of Leavitt-Wright’s most memorable experiences was her participation in a national young leaders’ mission to Moscow. She was inspired by the work done on behalf of Jews in Russia and enjoyed networking with some impressive peers from across Canada.

“It was nice coming to a bigger city,” Leavitt-Wright recalls following her family’s move from London to Edmonton in 2007. She became active as a volunteer in the Talmud Torah pre-school which, at that time, was parent-run, eventually joining the TT

board and taking on a major role in organizing the school’s massive 100th Anniversary celebrations in 2012.

Leavitt-Wright joined the Aviv Dancers, helping to establish that organization’s board of directors and society status. Taking things up a notch, she co-founded the annual Festival Hatzafon. On the Synagogue front, she served on the Beth Shalom committee that led to the hiring of former spiritual leader Rabbi Kliel Rose.

Her service on the Jewish Federation board and executive, and two consecutive stints as UJA campaign chair (2014-2016), will stand Leavitt-Wright in good stead as she looks to governance and fundraising from a professional perspective.

“Every role I’ve had I’ve learned something from,” said Leavitt-Wright who is grateful for the “dedicated, passionate people” she’s met along the way.

“Stacey is a community builder,” said Shafir of his new CEO. “Everywhere she’s gone and everything she’s done in this community has been to build community to bring people together, to invoke enthusiasm in projects, either existing or new... We are really looking forward to her enthusiasm and seeing what she can do.”

Shafir has stayed on longer than his original mandate as Federation president to provide continuity during the professional handover and a pandemic that has impacted the Jewish community resulting in a significantly reduced Federation staff, resignations by some board members and fundraising concerns.

Continued on page 12



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The Jewish Federation

OF EDMONTON

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the  
Jewish Federation of Edmonton,  
The Jewish Community Centre of Edmonton, and  
The Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation

Will be held on Wednesday, December 9, 2020  
Commencing at 7:00 pm, at

Beth Shalom Synagogue  
Sanctuary  
11916 Jasper Ave., Edmonton, Alberta

Required AHS measures will be observed.  
Pre-registration of attendance with a signed COVID waiver is required.  
If the Government of Alberta permits us to proceed electronically at any  
time prior to December 9, 2020, we will move to an online meeting.

For the purpose of:

1. Reviewing the financial results for the fiscal year just ended.  
2. Receiving an update on past activity.  
3. Elections of slates of Directors for the organizations.  
4. Amending the Bylaws of the various organizations, if necessary.

In accordance with the Bylaws of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, the  
Nominating Committee is giving notice that at the upcoming Annual General  
Meeting, there will be up to 10 vacancies to the Board of Directors of the  
Jewish Federation of Edmonton, of which 6 are for a 3-year term, 2 are for a  
2-year term, and 2 are for a 1-year term.

On behalf of the Nominations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton  
and Chair Ellery Lew, the following is Notice of the slate of nominations of the  
following Directors:

Daryl Antel – Three-year term  
Dr. Liran Levin – Three- year term  
Meirav Or – Three-year term  
Dr. Teddy Braun – Two-year term  
Karen Oshry – One-Year term

Rebecca Asbell – Three-year term  
Lisa Miller – Three-year term  
Steve Shafir – Three-year term  
Benaron Glieberman – Two-year term

Any Member of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton (any individual 18 years  
of age or older who made a contribution between September 1, 2019 and  
August 31, 2020 in the sum of at least \$18.00, or any one individual 18 years  
of age or older who made a joint contribution with another person between  
September 1, 2019 and August 31, 2020 in the sum of at least \$36.00) is eligible  
for nomination to the Federation Board. Additional nominations may be made  
in writing to [ceo@edjfed.org](mailto:ceo@edjfed.org) on or before October 24, 2020, and must be made  
by three nominating Members and include the signature of the proposed  
nominee, who must also be a member. Please note that the bylaws do not allow  
for nominations from the floor. All nominations are as set out above.

Any Member who would like to request that any additional business be  
conducted at the Annual General Meeting may do so in writing to the Chief  
Executive Officer up to and including November 25, 2020. Any request must  
be endorsed by signature of 20 Members. No other business other than that  
set out above or that as requested in accordance with this paragraph will be  
conducted at the Annual General Meeting.

Please pre-register for this meeting by registering at:  
<http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=bnbgkheab&oeidk=a07ehcfny8493edbc3>  
Or emailing: [ceo@edjfed.org](mailto:ceo@edjfed.org)  
The meeting will be available on livestream via the following link:  
[edmontonbethshalom.org/livestream.html](http://edmontonbethshalom.org/livestream.html)  
Note that those attending virtually cannot vote or speak, but can watch,  
and in-person attendance is limited to 50 people.

# Jewish Studies Week at U of A: Nov. 16 - 20



Dr. Wolf Gruner

Jewish Studies Week takes place at the University of Alberta from Nov. 16 to 20. The Annual Toby & Saul Reichert Holocaust Lecture will feature Dr. Wolf Gruner on the topic of “Defiance and Protest: Forgotten Individual Jewish Resistance in Nazi Germany.” The lecture will be held on Monday Nov.16, available to stream at [ualberta.ca/wirth-institute](http://ualberta.ca/wirth-institute). A live zoom Q&A session with Dr. Gruner will follow the lecture. Registration is required.

Jewish resistance during the Holocaust is largely understood as rare armed group activities in the Nazi occupied East, for example ghetto uprisings or partisan activities. By contrast, this talk focuses on forgotten individual acts of resistance, like the case of Hertha Reis, who protested in plain daylight against the persecution in 1941, a few months before the mass deportation started in the capital of the Third Reich.

Based on a new approach and using new sources, as logbooks of Berlin police precincts, trial materials from various German cities as well as video testimonies of

survivors, the talk will demonstrate how Jewish women and men performed countless acts of resistance in Nazi Germany proper between 1933 and 1945.

Dr. Wolf Gruner holds the Shapell-Guerin Chair in Jewish Studies, is Professor of History at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles since 2008 and is the Founding Director of the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research since 2014.

He is a specialist in the history of the Holocaust and in comparative genocide studies. He received his PhD in History in 1994 as well as his Habilitation in 2006 from the Technical University Berlin. He was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University, Yad Vashem Jerusalem, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Center for Jewish Studies Berlin-Brandenburg, as well as the Desmond E. Lee Visiting Professor for Global Awareness at Webster University in St. Louis.

Gruner is the author of ten books on the Holocaust. His most recent book is *The Holocaust in Bohemia and Moravia Czech Initiatives, German Policies, Jewish Responses* (Berghahn 2019). The original German version with Wallstein was highly acclaimed. The book was published in Czech 2019 and is forthcoming in Hebrew.

He is currently finishing the manuscript of an exciting book about forgotten acts of individual defiance, protest

and resistance of German and Austrian Jews during the Holocaust. This book for a broader public will feature the life stories of five Jewish men and women who defied or protested against persecution in Nazi Germany. By exploring additional courageous acts, the book will demonstrate the wide range of individual resistance.

On November 19, a lecture will be delivered by Dr. Sarah Imhoff (Indiana University) from 5 - 6:30 pm. The topic is “An Unlikely Zionist: Jessie Sampter, Judaism, and Disability.”

Jessie Sampter (1883-1938) was born to a wealthy Jewish family in New York but moved to Palestine while much of it was still “a malarial swamp,” in the words of her Zionist friend. A single woman who had had polio as a child, Sampter was quite the unlikely pioneer. Neither a sinner nor a saint—two dominant images of people with disabilities—Sampter drew on her embodied perspective to see Judaism and Zionism differently.

Dr. Sarah Imhoff is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the Borns Jewish Studies Program at Indiana University. She is author of *Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism* (Indiana University Press, 2017) and is currently at work on a book about Jessie Sampter.

The lecture will be live streamed; it is free and open to the public. To register, contact Dr. Peter Sabo at [psabo@ualberta.ca](mailto:psabo@ualberta.ca)

## JFED’s new CEO *Cont. from page 11*

Shafir expressed gratitude for the strong professionalism and management of Debby Shoctor who has served Federation as CEO for six and a half years.

“Debby is second to none in the Federation system,” Shafir told *AJNews*.

“I want to thank Debby for everything she’s done,” added Shafir, praising Shoctor’s role in professionalizing and streamlining Federation operations and “keeping Jewish life at the forefront” in Jewish Edmonton.

Shoctor, who moved to Edmonton 33 years ago to work for B’nai Brith Canada as Western Regional Director, has served an astonishing number of organizations as a Jewish communal professional and/or a professional Jewish community volunteer, among them Hadassah-WIZO and Jewish National Fund. Prior to taking on the CEO position at Federation, she was the archivist at the Jewish Archive and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta for over 13 years and served as a Federation VP and a UJA volunteer.

“She is an unsung hero,” says her successor, Leavitt-

Wright, adding that Shoctor has given the community “tremendous leadership” while providing “a strong foundation to build from.”

Federation highlights during Shoctor’s tenure as CEO include the successful solicitation of major gifts that led to the permanent endowment of the Belzberg Family and Jewish Federation of Edmonton Professorship in Jewish Studies at the University of Alberta as well as a significant Holocaust education fund named in memory of her predecessor, Russ Joseph, of blessed memory, who was a mentor to both Shoctor and Leavitt-Wright.

Shafir notes that, like Shoctor, Leavitt-Wright is “invested in Edmonton” and can hit the ground running due to her already deep knowledge of, and commitment to, her community.

Leavitt-Wright has already begun the journey while Shoctor has graciously agreed to provide guidance and mentorship through to her retirement at the beginning of January.

By all accounts, Leavitt-Wright has the right credentials and experience but, according to Shoctor, the most important prerequisite is her “Jewish heart.”

“It’s a privilege and honour to work for the community,”

says Shoctor who, nonetheless, admits some fatigue after more than six years in the professional hot seat.

“What you hope to accomplish is to leave things better than they were when you got here. I think that’s the case,” adds Shoctor, who takes pride in having brought Federation “into the 21st century,” establishing processes and procedures that are the bedrock of good management and streamlining operations.

“We are very lucky that we have the community we have...We just have to keep it going for the next generation,” Shoctor adds.

She urges a warm welcome from Jewish Edmonton for their newly minted Federation CEO.

Annual Toby & Saul Reichert Holocaust Lecture



Defiance and Protest

Forgotten Individual Jewish Resistance in Nazi Germany

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Wolf Gruner holds the Shapell-Guerin Chair in Jewish Studies, is Professor of History at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles since 2008 and is the Founding Director of the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research since 2014.

Part of the 2020 Jewish Studies Week



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Jessie Sampter (1883-1938) was born to a wealthy Jewish family in New York, but moved to Palestine while much of it was still “a malarial swamp,” in the words of her Zionist friend. A single woman who had had polio as a child, Sampter was quite the unlikely pioneer. Neither a sinner nor a saint — two dominant images of people with disabilities—Sampter drew on her embodied perspective to see Judaism and Zionism differently.



Sarah Imhoff is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the Borns Jewish Studies Program at Indiana University. She is author of *Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism* (Indiana University Press, 2017) and is currently at work on a book about Jessie Sampter.

An Unlikely Zionist:

Jessie Sampter, Judaism, and Disability

“Give her guidance and encouragement and positive rather than negative [feedback] and give her time to learn what’s going on,” suggests Shoctor. “There is a bit of restructuring going on and things are not going to be exactly as they were and that has nothing to do with her. It has to do with the economy and the pandemic. Things are really changing.”

Edmonton isn’t alone in those shifting sands, said Shoctor, alluding to restructuring plans currently evolving at the national level involving Jewish Federations of Canada – United Israel Appeal (JFC-UIA) and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA).

Eyes wide open, Leavitt-Wright acknowledges there will be a learning curve. She feels strength in the potential of the community and exudes enthusiasm about tackling the challenges.

“For its size, this community really packs a punch in what it offers and what we have established here,” Leavitt-Wright says.

“There’s a lot going on and it takes a lot of people to pull that together as well... We have a vibrant community here.”

“My challenge and my joy will be to pull people together and to see them collaborate a little bit more. It very much depends on how people are willing and wanting to be engaged,” adds Leavitt-Wright, pointing to the community’s long-standing and enthusiastic participation in Heritage Days and Festival Hatzafon, celebrations that bring the community together.

“My vision is that we have a continued, vibrant, engaged community, that we have volunteers of all ages and stages wanting to show up, that we find roles for them and bring together our institutions in a collaborative way.”

In order to do that, Leavitt-Wright is looking forward to conducting a listening tour in order to get to know community members better and to find out what’s motivating them, while also turning her attention to other key priorities including fundraising and board development

COVID is a challenge, says Leavitt-Wright who sees an opportunity to rethink how the community does things. “There are a lot of vulnerable people right now; we have to find ways of responding and helping each other out.”

While acting locally, Leavitt-Wright will also be thinking globally about how Jewish Edmonton connects with communities across Canada and in Israel – always, she says, with a view to solutions that make sense for her Edmonton community.

“We should be inclusive and we should connect people to one another,” she says. That’s what makes us stronger.”

That’s the Wright stuff. So, let’s Leavitt at that!

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

# New funding reinvigorates Jewish studies at the University of Alberta

By Donna McKinnon, University of Alberta

A new infusion of funds thanks to a generous donation from the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, in partnership with Irving and Dianne Kipnes Foundation, and the Belzberg Family Foundation will ensure that Jewish studies at the University of Alberta will continue in perpetuity.

The Hebrew Bible and related Judaism courses have been taught at the university for many years, but with the retirements of professor Ehud Ben Zvi in 2014 and professor Francis Landy in 2015, the future of these foundational courses in Religious Studies lay in question.

As a small but interdisciplinary program, Religious Studies has faced numerous challenges over the years. It is broadly acknowledged, however, that the study of Judaism is essential to a serious and robust Religious Studies program.

With the support of members across the Arts community and a significant contribution from Sam and Frances Belzberg, the Belzberg Professorship in Jewish Studies was established.

On July 1, 2018, Peter Sabo, who earned his PhD in Religious Studies in 2017, was appointed the inaugural Belzberg Lecturer for a five-year term.

Beyond this term, however, lay uncertainty until this year when a generous gift from the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, in partnership with the Irving and Dianne Kipnes Foundation, ensured the sustainability of the newly re-named Belzberg Family and Jewish Federation of Edmonton Professorship in Jewish Studies, as well as the

uninterrupted development and delivery of related Jewish studies courses at the University of Alberta.

“I am overwhelmed by the positivity and continued contributions from people in the Jewish community, and by the students who come to my classes,” says Sabo. “These core courses in Jewish studies will continue to be taught, and that’s really good news.”

Sabo teaches Introduction to Biblical Hebrew I and II, as well as Introduction to Judaism as part of the Religious Studies program in the Department of History and Classics. The five key areas of focus include: introduction to and analysis of Judaism; Hebrew Bible studies; biblical Hebrew; history of Jewish peoples, culture, and society; and special topics, as appropriate. The courses promote an understanding and knowledge of Judaism and Jewish culture in secular and non-sectarian settings. In the current state of divisiveness and polarization—the secular study of religion has never been more important.

Sabo’s approach to teaching and to his own research is both literary and psychoanalytical, examining the bible’s influence on contemporary culture, politics, and identity.

“The study of the Hebrew Bible is fundamental not only to an understanding of Judaism, but also Islam, Christianity, and the entire history of western civilization,” he says. “Its influence cannot be overstated.”

Since 2018, the number of students in his Introduction to Judaism has tripled. Sabo attributes the popularity of the course to a number of factors, including his own passion for the subject, the popularity of television shows like *Unorthodox*, and in particular, the stability of the course offerings.



U of A Belzberg Lecturer Dr. Peter Sabo

“You can’t just have a course here and there, and then expect people to enroll in it,” he says. “You need to have this course offered year after year, as well as the upper level courses for students who want to take their studies further.”

With Jewish studies now firmly rooted in the Faculty of Arts, the future looks bright. As the endowment grows, additional funds will be used for curriculum development, student enrichment, community outreach, and other supports.

“Without the commitment, vision, and generosity of our community partners, the reinvigoration of Jewish studies would have been very difficult to achieve,” says Steve Patten, Interim Dean, Faculty of Arts.

“The comparative study of religion is vital for an understanding of contemporary society, culture, and politics, as well as for the history of ideas and the human quest for meaning. Within this complexity, we seek points of connection—a crucial step in our continuation and progression as a society.”

This article is reprinted from [ualberta.ca](http://ualberta.ca).

## Jewish Senior Citizens’ Centre *Cont. from page 10*

ceremony at the Jewish Cemetery, an event co-sponsored by the Edmonton Jewish Federation.

While the JDIC is very much a part of the Jewish community, it has also attained Pavlenko’s vision as a community hub, sharing expertise, resources and cultural enrichment with the community at large and welcoming all seniors as members regardless of faith or creed. Some 20 percent of the current membership is not Jewish – a testament to the value that friends and neighbours see in an increasingly diverse experience that, at the same time, offers a uniquely Jewish flavour.

While the risks associated with COVID have slowed down its usual hectic pace, the JDIC continues to provide a vital lifeline to its members. Pavlenko says it was the first Edmonton seniors’ centre to move live fitness classes online. Similarly, members are currently zooming in for the Centre’s 17th Annual Learning in Retirement, a six-week education series that this year includes a guided virtual tour of New York City art museums, and talks on the history of keyboard instruments and on Jewish history.

Pavlenko longs for the day she can throw open the doors of the Centre and welcome back its members.

“People are really missing the personal connections. It is what we are famous for,” says Pavlenko who has high praise for those members that are making a point of calling and corresponding with one another, thus breaking through the isolation caused by COVID.

JDIC President Lewis Wassel is disappointed that the pandemic has derailed a richly-deserved celebration of Svetlana Pavlenko’s 10th anniversary.

“We can’t celebrate it the way we’d like to, but we do want to recognize how successfully Svetlana has served as our director,” Wassel said. “We rely on her for everything.”

While milestones are a great time to glance at the rear view mirror, Pavlenko has both hands on the wheel and is focused on the road ahead, looking for new ways to meaningfully engage and inspire seniors.

“We want to continue breaking stereotypes. Seniors’ centres are not about bingo,” Pavlenko says, urging current members to

become even more involved and potential members, especially young seniors, to give the JDIC a try.

“If you have ideas, we will try to help make them a reality. We love to bring new programs.”

For more information about the Jewish Senior Citizens’ Centre, go to [jdicseniors.ca](http://jdicseniors.ca).

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


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from the

Sources

With rod or whip...

by Eliezer Segal

In light of current controversies over the legitimacy and scope of police departments, it might be instructive to glance at how some similar issues have been addressed in Jewish tradition.

The modern Hebrew word for police: *“shoter,”* has a venerable biblical pedigree. The Israelites were commanded to appoint judges and *shoterim* in order to ensure a righteous society in their homeland; and yet the precise functions of the *shoter* are not stipulated. Comparisons with occurrences elsewhere in scripture and cognate languages indicate that it designated an administrative official. Ibn Ezra explained that they constituted the political leadership that was the source of judicial authority. The same term was used, for example, to designate the Hebrew officers (from the tribe of Levi, according to rabbinic tradition) whom the Egyptian taskmasters appointed to oversee the slaves.

Early rabbinic texts assigned the *shoter* the specific task of enforcing judges’ decisions by force - “with a rod or whip” - especially if the parties refuse to accept the verdicts. The Maharal of Prague explained that it would be beneath the dignity of judges to soil their hands personally in scuffles with recalcitrant litigants.

When referring to their own judicial structures the rabbis of the Talmud employed a more precise term: the *“sh’liah beit din”* (agent of the court) whose job descriptions chiefly involved enforcing judges’ directives such as carrying out sentences.

Another category of enforcer mentioned in the Talmud and Midrash was the “agoranomos,” a prominent official in Hellenistic societies whose functions were adapted into the talmudic legal system. This was the market overseer who regulated - by force, if necessary - weights, measures and prices.

Making allowances for the vagaries of the nomenclature, I shall be conveniently translating all those official titles as “police.”

Jewish biblical exegetes expressed differing opinions about the degree to which the Torah allows the police independent authority in the exercise of their duties. Rabbi Elijah Mizrachi astutely summarized two prevalent approaches: On one side stand those who regard the police as the main wielders of power. They are the ones who can

coerce parties to obey the judges’ decisions, whereas (as argued by Rabbi Eleazar in the Midrash Tanhuma) the courts only issue theoretical verdicts that might be disregarded by the citizenry. The alternate position held that genuine power lies exclusively in the hands of the judges, whereas the police possess no authority other than what the judges confer upon them.

Maimonides’ code of Jewish law blended the diverse functionaries from the biblical and talmudic sources into a cohort of police who circulate through the marketplaces to regulate prices and weights, with a mandate to impose corporal punishment on violators.

But he also assigned them some duties for which there was no evident source in the earlier Jewish literature: For example, his police are authorized to actively patrol public areas - or even private residences - to forestall immodest partying, drinking and socializing between the sexes. Rabbi Jacob Zvi Mecklenburg ingeniously inferred such duties from the Torah’s stipulation that the judges and officers be appointed “throughout thy tribes.”

However, it is more likely that Maimonides was drawing here not on Jewish precedents but on the norms of his Muslim environment where an official known as the *“muhtasib”* was responsible for enforcing not only commercial integrity, but also personal morality and even religious orthodoxy and ritual practice. In fact, these areas also fell under the jurisdiction of the ancient Hellenistic “agoranomos.” Nevertheless, Maimonides refrained from assigning such intrusive authority to the Jewish policeman.

There is some ambivalence or inconsistency regarding the circumstances that warrant the police employing “rods and whips,” as distinct from merely arraigning defendants before the judges. The Torah ordained that perpetrators of involuntary manslaughter were allowed to flee to specially designated cities of refuge where they would be protected from the victims’ “blood avengers.” This fuelled intense rabbinic discussions to specify the distinctions between categories of premeditated homicide, unavoidable accidents, and manslaughter through negligence. In this connection Abba Shaul proposed in the Mishnah that a policeman (“agent of the court”) should be completely exonerated if he caused a death in the performance of his

duties. He derived this from the fact that the Torah illustrates the law with a case of chopping wood in the forest, a purely discretionary activity. This implies that if the death occurred while performing one’s duty (including disciplining of children or students!), then there would be no liability whatsoever, not even as involuntary manslaughter.

In keeping with his view that agents of the court are authorized to use physical force in enforcing the law, Maimonides understood that the sages were speaking about a policeman’s unintentional killing of a suspect who was resisting arrest - including, apparently, one who had not been officially declared guilty. Only in such equivocal cases was it necessary for Abba Shaul to expound that the officer was not even punishable for manslaughter - but this was only because of his involvement in a Torah-mandated activity.

Maimonides’ arch-critic Rabbi Abraham ben David, the “Ra’avad” of Posquières, protested that there was no talmudic source for Maimonides’ interpretation. He therefore proposed a different understanding of the case, based on a scenario that is mentioned elsewhere in the Mishnah in connection with a court bailiff who caused a culprit’s death by fatally exceeding the number of lashes he was supposed to administer (although that source actually declares the bailiff guilty of manslaughter and subject to exile to a sanctuary city).

Underlying these discussions are differing views about the proper roles of police and the limits that should be set to their use of force. All this resonates strongly with our current controversies about public policy. I find no indication that the rabbis’ involvement with these questions arose in response to actual incidents, nor that they contemplated situations of deliberate police brutality. More probably they were doing their best to balance the practical necessity for law enforcement with their conviction that the police themselves must be answerable before the law.

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

Every Child Matters: Education as Reconciliation

By Lesley Machon

It’s 1973, and Phyllis Webstad is six years old. Despite having little money, her grandmother takes Phyllis to pick out a new t-shirt for her first day of school. Her first new outfit! Phyllis chooses a bright orange shirt, which she proudly dons the next day before leaving the Dog Creek Reserve to attend the Mission school. When she arrives at school however, Phyllis is stripped of her clothes and marshalled into a saga of abuse. She, and thousands of other Indigenous children across the county, endure systematic assaults on their dignity, self-esteem, identity and culture as a result of assimilative government policies to “get rid of the Indian problem” (as described by Duncan Campbell Scott, a government official who was responsible for many of the residential school policies.)

Forty years later, Orange Shirt Day is nationally recognized to acknowledge the abuse endured by children who attended the residential school system. The affirmation that “Every Child Matters” is a response to the thousands of Indigenous children who were systematically made to feel worthless as a result of their mistreatment in residential schools. The trauma they endured festered in silence, perpetuating shame in families and communities across the country as Indigenous Peoples swallowed their pain. As a result of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, these stories are finally coming to light, and instigating change. By sharing and listening to these tales of stolen childhoods, we are turning to face our nation’s horrific history of racial violence and intergenerational trauma that resulted from the attempted genocide of First Peoples.




In the words of Cornel West: “you can’t really move forward, until you look back.” Orange Shirt Day is about contextualizing the ongoing struggle faced by Indigenous Peoples in our country. It’s about looking back so that we can move forward, deeply committed to the truth that every child matters.

The Calgary Jewish Academy participated in a collective remembrance as we listened to lost stories. Staff chose books from Indigenous authors, and students grades K-9 participated in age-appropriate and meaningful activities to honour the children who attended residential schools in Canada. We read, listened, and explored the themes of loss and injustice through art and discussion. We designed our own orange shirts as tributes to those who died at the hands of, or survived, residential schools. Our efforts were simultaneous acts of acknowledgement and refusal: attempts to recognize the horrors thousands of innocent children endured, and refusal to participate in a future


that further dehumanized Indigenous Peoples.

As a school, we are committed to the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action, which means far more than a single day of reflection. Our curriculum is infused with Indigenous voices, and we seek to expand this conversation to include our families and greater community when possible. You’ll see staff holding a novel by an Indigenous author, a text each teacher has committed to reading this year. We hope you’ll lean into this dialogue with us. Beyond simply learning the facts, empathy and compassion is cultivated when we breathe in the stories of survivors, and connect with fictional characters that carry these deeper truths for us. In honour of black braids, orange shirts, and the right to be valued and loved.

*Leslie Machon is the Junior High Humanities Teacher at Calgary Jewish Academy.*



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# U of L prof wins Jewish literary award for Yiddish translation

By Jeremy Appel

A University of Lethbridge literature professor has won a national Jewish literary award for a translation of her late mother's book of Yiddish poetry and essays, her second such honour in the past year.

Goldie Morgentaler, a Yiddish translator by trade who teaches 19th century British literature at U of L, will accept the J.I. Segal Award for her translation of Chava Rosenfarb's *Confessions of a Yiddish Writer and Other Essays* at an online reception on November 12, organized by Montreal's Jewish Public Library. Last year, *Confessions* received the Canadian Jewish Literary Award.

Morgentaler said it was important to her to get Rosenfarb's work out to a larger, English-speaking audience.

"My mother is a writer who really should be better known than she is," said Morgentaler. "The reason she's not better known is because she wrote in Yiddish and so was dependent on someone like me to translate her in a language more people can read."

Rosenfarb spoke English fluently, but writing in a language is a different beast than speaking it, so Morgentaler would always provide a second eye to go over her mother's English drafts.

In the world of Yiddish literature, there's been a history of downplaying the work of female writers, which has been slowly rectified in more recent years. Morgentaler says this collection is a microcosm of that rectification.

The book delves extensively into Rosenfarb's personal testimony of the Holocaust, having survived the Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, but includes separate sections of Rosenfarb's literary essays, as well as two travelogues based on her journeys to Australia and the Czech Republic.

Morgentaler says her mother's experience in the Holocaust "followed her everywhere."

"The essay on Australia is lighter in tone than the other essays," says Morgentaler. "On the other hand, she's saying

Sukkot celebrated across Alberta



With COVID restrictions in place, Sukkot was creatively celebrated around the world and throughout Alberta. Chabad Edmonton brought their Sukkah-mobile to Oleskiw Park for an outdoor family centred Sukkah party.

that she's going to Australia to visit the Jewish community there and that's a community that is made up of survivors who could not get far away enough from Europe."

Unlike in Canada, there is a significant portion of Australian Jews who still speak Yiddish, she added.

Raised in Montreal by Rosenfarb and her father, famed abortion rights advocate Henry Morgentaler, Goldie's first language was Yiddish.

"My friends were, like me, the children of Holocaust survivors, so for them too Yiddish was a mother tongue, and we all learned English together at school," Morgentaler says. "In the early days of the 20th century, most Jews didn't learn French. They spoke Yiddish."

Growing up in 1950s Montreal, Morgentaler went to a labour Zionist school, where students were taught English, Yiddish, Hebrew and French. She says her Hebrew-language skills are easily the weakest of the four,

since everyone she knew in Montreal spoke English, Yiddish and French.

"My parents were happy for me to learn Hebrew, but there was a lot of animosity between the Bundists (socialists), who were my parents, and the Zionists in Europe before the war. To some extent, that carried over into my childhood and early youth," she said. "I think that's another reason I forgot my Hebrew, but we were taught it very extensively."

Morgentaler says that since there's been so much written about the Holocaust already, providing additional documentation for future generations wasn't a major motivation for this translation.

"I really was more motivated by the idea that I wanted my mother's work to be known," she said.

*Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for Alberta Jewish News.*



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## CommUNITY event features amazing women in Calgary



An inspirational brunch was held on October 18 hosted by CommUNITY Magazine, a new initiative that celebrates and honours amazing women from within the Calgary Jewish Community. "CommUNITY is about fostering strong, new relationships and uniting women within our sometimes disconnected community," says Publisher Leanne Rzepa. "Supporting, honouring, networking and connecting on personal and professional levels is something all Jewish women in our community can benefit from."

### Calgary's best *Cont. from page 6*

Born on April 22, 1908 in Berlin, to Alfred and Charlotte "Lotte" Caspari, Peter grew up in a well-to-do Jewish family. His son, Dr. David Caspari, an Internal Medicine specialist living in Toronto, describes the Caspari home as being over 12,000 square feet with servants' quarters. The family was wealthy on both sides. The maternal line owned a steel works factory in Chemnitz, Germany while Peter's father and grandfather were both Master Builders, as the profession was known prior to modern-day professions of architect and engineer, that would oversee construction projects.

David explains, "They thought of themselves as quite assimilated. They celebrated Christmas, and were assimilated in dress and education. They made a lot of money. They didn't see themselves as a race and religion apart."

Peter studied architecture graduating from Städtische Baugewerkschule in Berlin in 1931. David explains, "I don't think he had really started [his career]. He did a beautiful cenotaph in Weisensee Jewish Cemetery in Berlin." He continues, "Father was politically very active against the Hitler Youth and was tipped off by the family chauffeur that he was going to be arrested."

Peter took his wife, Erika, and fled to Switzerland. His widowed mother — Alfred Caspari had passed away in 1926 — came later. While in Switzerland, Peter travelled back to Berlin numerous times to retrieve some of the

family's possessions, like books and furniture, which David now has in his home. Various family businesses were expropriated by the Nazis, which David spent ten years trying to reclaim, some of it successfully, including a department store in Alexanderplatz in the centre of Berlin. He adds that a cousin, living in Vancouver, spent 20 years in restitution successfully reclaiming properties in Chemnitz.

Peter soon moved the family to London, England and it is here his architectural career flourished.

According to the London Deco Flats website, which serves as a virtual library of the city's 1930s multi-residential buildings, he built Kingsley Court and nine other apartment buildings.

The website describes the 1933 Kingsley Court as, "This is a gem of a building... It has a curved, organic 'Z'-shaped plan on acute angled site. This is one of the first blocks of flats in an expressionist style in England, and the first work here by Peter Caspari, a former assistant of Erich Mendelsohn and like him a refugee here in 1933. The banded horizontals and use of curves is more sophisticated than that by any comparable British architect and shows the influence of Mendelsohn. This is the most eloquent of Caspari's blocks of flats...."

During WWII, Peter volunteered with the Pioneer Corp. where he built anti-aircraft installations. After the War, David explains, "[Winston] Churchill was voted out and it became a Labour government." Peter did not see any opportunity in England and in 1951 brought his family —

daughter Dorothy was born in 1937 and David was born in 1948 — to North America. He went to Edmonton, Calgary and finally decided to settle in Toronto.

David explains that his father had a lot of financial support from financial backers in England because at the time the banks were not lending to developers. "It was one of his strengths that he had the financial backing to do something like that. But it was rough going because the economy was boom and bust in the 1950s and 60s."

David recalls that his father looked at doing a project in Winnipeg "but it never materialized. He designed a project in Montreal but it never got built after the PQ government was elected."

Despite the turbulent nature of the business, Peter ended his career on a high note. In 1972, he completed 2 Bloor Street West, also known as Toronto's CIBC building, and over the following two years he built the Sheppard Centre in North York.

David remembers his father, who passed away in 1999, as, "Quite flamboyant, very driven, quite European in the way he saw life. He was a European man of the early 1900s. He enjoyed partying, he was very sociable."

Peter Caspari introduced a new concept in housing, not in one but two major Canadian cities, on almost opposite ends of the country, at the same time.

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