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EJFF brings Jewish culture to the big screen

By Chloe Soibelman

Settle into the timeless seats at the Capitol Theatre at Fort Edmonton Park and let the screen transport you to another world for two hours. Each year, the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival (EJFF) brings Jewish life, culture, and history to the big screen, giving our local audiences opportunities to indulge in cinematic escape. The 29th edition of EJFF launches on Tuesday, May 6. Over the course of the festival, you will find a wide variety of compelling stories that will make you laugh, cry and ponder.

While there is no intended theme for this year's festival, a strong underlying note of resilience comes through each film. The opening night film, *Song of Ascent*, generously sponsored by Friends of the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival, follows previously orthodox singer-songwriter Matisyahu as he attempts to pursue his career in a post-October 7 world. His dealings with cancellations and protests thrust him into the role of spokesperson for Jews worldwide, as he strives to support those most deeply affected by the Hamas attack and ongoing war. This film highlights the power of music and the perseverance of the Jewish people as they continue to show strength despite unthinkable adversity. There is a special Zoom session planned on Wednesday, May 7 with the film's producer, Shlomo Weprin, that promises to engage the audience in a deeper understanding of his project.

Not only is there an opportunity to see films in-person but Edmonton residents can also watch from the comfort of their own homes. Included in our online



The Edmonton Jewish Film Festival will close on May 15 at the Capitol Theatre at Fort Edmonton Park with the hilarious dark comedy "Bad Shabbos" starring Kyra Sedgewick and David Paymer. Festival passes, individual tickets and full information about the films are available at jewishedmonton.org.

lineup are incredible shorts that focus on survival, including *Crossing the River*, *Paddling for Life*, and *Hope on the Water*, each telling personal and touching stories. *Pink Lady*, our first online feature film depicts the raw emotional story of Bati, an orthodox Jewish woman whose life is upended when she learns her family has been living a lie. Our second online feature, *Never Alone*, draws from the astonishing account of Finnish Jews during the Holocaust and their miraculous fight to survive despite all odds.

Sam Koplowitz, chair of the Film Festival Committee, is delighted that the festival is now showing most of the films in the theatre. "Seeing films with a live audience is the best way to enjoy them," he says. The opportunity to watch together, continues on Thursday May 8 with *The Stronghold*, a film that was

made for big screen viewing. This action-filled drama, based on a true story, chronicles the harrowing plight of the last remaining Israeli stronghold in Sinai during the Yom Kippur War. The leaders of the troops stationed there were faced with the impossible task of saving their platoon after being cornered by Egyptian forces.

If you are interested in history, you will love *The Blond Boy from the Casbah*. This movie is a delight for film buffs and lovers of culture and history. This film depicts a young boy's upbringing as a Jew amidst the multicultural mosaic of society in Algiers before the civil war. Immediately preceding the film, there is a unique opportunity to experience a bygone era up

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Calgary Holocaust Memorial Site will be upgraded

By Maxine Fischbein

We are what we remember.

Thanks to the vision and generosity of local supporters, Jewish Calgary will soon receive a gift that will enhance remembrance of individuals and families murdered during the Shoah, honour local Holocaust survivors, and provide ample and beautiful spaces designed to enhance quiet contemplation, community engagement, and education.

Shortly after Yom HaShoah, which this year takes place on Wednesday, April 23, visitors to the JCC will notice work commencing at the existing Holocaust memorial site on the west side of the building as Phase I of the Calgary Holocaust Memorial Upgrade begins.

For the past five years, Ron and Barb Krell have contemplated ways that the current memorial site might be enhanced and revitalized. Roots from surrounding poplar trees had caused heaving that disturbed the site and caused the ground itself to be increasingly dangerous, especially for members of the community with mobility issues, the Krells

told *AJNews*.

The poplars and some bushes have already been removed in preparation for Phase I of the project, commencing May 1, which will incorporate imaginative landscaping and hardscaping so as to create more conducive spaces for Yom HaShoah commemorations and school visits.

Gone will be the chain-link fence that currently surrounds the memorial.

"The idea is that people will be able to come closer and congregate," says Ron Krell. "Right now it is hard to get close to the memorial. During Yom HaShoah, most people end up in the JCC parking lot, which feels impersonal and a little too far away."

"We need a more reflective space in which we can really honour the memories and all that they signify," says Barb Krell.

The current memorial wall includes names, originally provided by Calgary-based survivors and descendants, of loved ones who perished at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators.

"Over the years, we have been approached by community members who want to add loved ones to the memorial wall. We will now be able to honour

these and additional requests while also acknowledging those whose names are unknown," said Marnie Bondar, who co-chairs the Holocaust and Human Rights: Remembrance and Education department of Calgary Jewish Federation together with Dahlia Libin.

Phase II of the project will see the erection of a second installation which will – for the first time ever – pay tribute to Calgary-connected Holocaust survivors, including those who settled here, helping to build and sustain the local Jewish community. Some gave an incredible gift to succeeding generations by sharing their painful personal testimonies with students and other civic groups, thus helping to mitigate racism, antisemitism and xenophobia while inculcating good citizenship and the upholding of democratic ideals.

"Sadly, most of our local survivors have now passed away. We want to memorialize them while honouring those who continue to inspire us today," said Dahlia Libin.

Organizers hope to complete Phase I of the project by the end of the summer with a rededication ceremony tentatively set for Sunday, Sept. 28, 2025.

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Negev event tackles “new era” of overt antisemitism

By Mark Cooper for JNF Calgary

Strong voices inside and outside the Jewish community who have stood up and spoken out bravely against post-October 7 antisemitism are coming together at Calgary’s 2025 Negev Event.

Hosted by JNF Calgary and Israel Magen Fund of Canada (IMFoC), the May 8 fundraising event for the Ashdod Rehabilitation & Therapy Centre features a fireside chat between Columbia University Professor Shai Davidai and lawyer, journalist and author Warren Kinsella.

The 41-year-old Israeli-born Davidai was locked out of his own campus for speaking out passionately against anti-Jewish, anti-Israel hate that plagued the university since the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack on Southern Israel. He will speak to the sudden change in trajectory his life took as he found himself on the front lines as a Jewish civil rights leader and activist.

“We’re really looking forward to hearing from Shai about what we can do to join him to constructively fight antisemitism, because we have to change our tactics in this new era where it is much more overt,” said Elliott Steinberg, Executive Director of JNF Calgary.

“He’s been such a strong voice. He doesn’t pull any punches and we expect that it will be a captivating and engaging conversation.”

Kinsella, recently recognized with a King Charles III Coronation Medal for his contributions fighting antisemitism in Canada, has been one of the strongest non-Jewish online advocates and allies to the community. He’s been touring and reporting for Sun Media from the kibbutzim and other sites where more than 1,200 Israelis were brutally slaughtered by Hamas terrorists.

Steinberg said any time people like Kinsella and other non-Jews in Canadian society “stand up to the tsunami of antisemitism is very gratifying and shows us we are not alone.”

The event will also honour Calgary Heritage Member of Parliament Shuvaloy “Shuv” Majumdar for his pro-Israel stance and staunch support of Calgary’s

Jewish community.

JNF Calgary President Cheryl Gurevitch said she gained tremendous admiration for Majumdar when he came to the community vigil two days after October 7 and said “I do not arrive here as Jewish. I do not arrive here as an ally. I arrive here as a Zionist.”

“That is something that takes great courage to say and shows what a strong moral compass Shuv has,” said Gurevitch.

“He isn’t afraid to put himself out there and stand up for what he believes in despite any pushback. People flock to him because of his moral clarity. Whether it’s with the Jewish community or any other community in need, he’s just feet on the ground, hands on.”

Gurevitch hopes these three can help catalyze people to stand up, speak loudly and take action.

The title of the event *Moving Forward: Jewish Civil Rights in a New Era* was chosen because it aligns with JNF Canada’s mandate to provide Zionist education that inspires both Jews and non-Jews to support the State of Israel and the Jewish diaspora.

Steinberg said he’s grateful for the event partnership with IMFoC, a Canadian registered charity that has mobilized to support vital search and rescue efforts, mental and physical health and social services for impacted communities in Israel.

Harold Heilbut, the President/CEO of Israel Magen Fund of Canada, shared that the event collaboration aligns with the mission of IMFoC, a Canadian registered charity, to mobilize support for vital search and rescue efforts, mental and physical health, and social services for impacted communities in Israel.

“This year’s Negev event supports a state-of-the-art rehabilitation and therapy centre in Ashdod filling a critically important need to address a severe shortage of rehabilitation services in southern Israel. The healthcare system is stretched far beyond its breaking



Israeli professor Shai Davidai outside of Columbia University, April 22, 2024. (Photo Luke Tress, via JTA).

point, worsening since the start of the October 7 war. It’s an excellent example of the kinds of important projects we support,” said Heilbut.

The event kicks off at 6:30 p.m. at Beth Tzedec Congregation with a VIP reception with the featured speakers. The main program, which includes musical guest Arie Sacke from Calgary Opera, begins at 7:30 p.m.

Earlier in the day, Davidai will meet – at his request – for a roundtable with university students and high school seniors, who can register through JNF by reaching out directly to Elliott Steinberg.

Shai Davidai will also be in Alberta on June 18, 2025 at the JNF Edmonton Negev Gala. For information contact jnfedmonton.ca.

For sponsorship opportunities and corporate donations, visit jnf.ca/CalgaryNegev2025.

To purchase tickets or make a personal donation, visit imfoc.org/calgary-negev.

IMFoC is a registered Canadian charity and will provide official tax receipts for eligible donations, as per CRA guidelines.

JNF Calgary & Israel Magen Fund of Canada

NEGEV EVENT 2025

Moving Forward: Jewish Civil Rights in a New Era

SHAI DAVIDAI

Israeli Columbia University Professor and outspoken Jewish Civil Rights Activist

WARREN KINSELLA

Lawyer, Journalist, and Author

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WWW.JNF.CA/CALGARYNEGEV2025

Antisemitism reached record levels across Canada in 2024

Antisemitism in Canada has reached record-setting heights, according to the latest edition of the B’nai Brith Canada Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents which was released at an Ottawa press conference on April 7.

The total number of reported cases of hatred targeting Jews reached an apex of 6,219 incidents in 2024. While 12 incidents were violence, 386 were cases of vandalism and 5818 were reported incidents of harassment, which includes slurs, statements and systemic discrimination.

Online harassment constituted the vast majority of all reported antisemitic incidents – totalling 86 percent. The amount based exclusively on online harassment rose to 5,367 incidents, an increase of 161 percent from 2022.)

This is the highest number B’nai Brith Canada has documented since the inception of its Audit in 1982. It reflects a 7.4 per cent increase in incidents since 2023, when they recorded a then-unprecedented 5,791 national tally. This corresponds to a 124.6 per cent increase from 2022 to 2024.

On average, about 17 incidents occurred each day in 2024 – a dramatic uptick from eight a day, which was reported in 2022.

“Our Audit documented haunting levels of antisemitism,” said Richard Robertson, B’nai Brith Canada’s Director of Research and Advocacy. “We cannot permit this to become normalized.”

Some notable examples included:

In May, at an anti-Israel encampment at the University of Toronto, an individual performed a Nazi salute at a Jewish student and declared that he

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BEIT HALOCHEM CANADA

DISABLED VETERANS OF ISRAEL

Eden Ram was a 20-year-old officer serving in the Home Front Command and stationed at the Urim base. On October 7, Hamas terrorists raided her base killing four young soldiers with their initial hail of gunfire.

As Eden raced to the command centre, dodging bullets, she was hit in her leg, hand, and pelvis. The centre quickly turned into a bloody battlefield. Eden played dead as she lay wounded and losing blood among her friends' bodies. Eden didn't expect to live and sent farewell messages to her family, writing that she loved them and asking them to pray for her.

Hours after the attack began, Eden was rescued by Battalion 669 who fought to overcome the terrorists. Eden was evacuated with the base's one other survivor. When she arrived at the hospital, she was in critical condition, her body riddled with 12 bullets.

Eden was on life support for nine days as medical teams worked around the clock to save her. During her three months in hospital, Eden was visited regularly by Beit Halochem volunteers, some of whom were injured veterans themselves. They were there to show her that life after injury is possible.



Eden today

Eden goes to Beit Halochem Jerusalem every day where she works hard with physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Even with one bullet still lodged in her hip, Eden is recovering, little by little, as she takes step after step!

Once the fighting stops for Israel's injured veterans, their real battle is only beginning. Since its 1949 establishment, Beit Halochem has been the only organization legally responsible for the well-being of all Israel's wounded veterans, from the day of injury and for the rest of their lives. Our role is more significant than ever.

To meet the needs of its now-over 65,000 members, including more than 15,000 since October 7, Beit Halochem continues to expand its inventories of specialized equipment and augmentrosters of skilled staff at its Centres in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Be'er Sheva, Nahariya, and the future Ashdod. At the state-of-the-art facilities, a wide array of exceptional rehabilitative programs and services assist Israel's disabled veterans, like Eden, in reclaiming their lives.

Hear courageous injured Hero of Israel, Eden Ram tell her story in Calgary on Thursday, May 22 when Beit Halochem Canada, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel presents *Beyond the 7th: Stronger Together*.



Eden at the start of her rehabilitation

BEIT HALOCHEM CANADA

DISABLED VETERANS OF ISRAEL

PRESENTS

beyond the 7th

STRONGER TOGETHER

Join us for an inspiring evening with Israel's Heroes injured on October 7 and beyond. Their stories of determination, strength, and triumph are accompanied by exceptional music directly from Israel.

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Meet Our Heroes

EDEN RAM
Hit by 12 bullets when her base was overrun by Hamas terrorists, Eden is one of two survivors from the October 7 attack on her base.

EYATAR EDRI
Involved in rescuing his own parents from Hamas terrorists on October 7, Evyatar, a police officer in Ofakim, is now affected by PTSD. Evyatar's mother, Rachel, is famous for feeding the terrorists who held her hostage.

JONATHAN PINTO
While preventing terrorists from entering Kibbutz Nirim, Jonathan's tank was hit by a missile. After saving many lives on October 7, Jonathan is now learning to live without his eyesight after his injury.

LIAM SHPILMAN
After voluntarily enlisting as a reservist, Liam was critically injured by a Hezbollah drone while defending Israel's border with Lebanon. Suffering injuries to limbs, organs, veins, and arteries, Liam has since endured dozens of surgeries.

YONTI BAHAT
Seriously injured in Gaza, Yonti was evacuated to medical aid by his brother who served as a combat officer in his brigade. A paramedic, who Yonti had personally trained, delivered a life-saving procedure in the helicopter en route to hospital.

Featuring

OR COHEN
A top candidate to represent Israel in Eurovision 2024, Or Cohen was last year's runner up in "Kochav Haba" and has since established herself as one of Israel's leading singers. Or performs with other renowned singers and will soon be releasing her debut album.

CHEN DANINO
Appearing solo and in bands across Israel and worldwide, Chen most often writes and performs his own songs reflecting on his experiences during the war and his feelings on loss.

LIAD GRUSHKA
A pianist and music producer who plays with, and produces for, Israel's most popular artists. Liad performs worldwide and has been a part of Beit Halochem Canada's annual event for many years.

Alberta funding helps combat antisemitism

The Alberta government is pledging funds to the Jewish communities in Calgary and Edmonton to help combat increasing incidents of antisemitism.

Since Oct. 7, 2023, when the Jewish community in Israel faced its largest and most deadly targeted attacks since the Holocaust, antisemitism has been on the rise across Canada and the world. According to Statistics Canada, the Jewish community is the most targeted group for hate crimes in Canada and were the target of 70 per cent of all religion-motivated hate crimes across the country in 2023. B'nai Brith Canada also recently reported an unprecedented 6,219 antisemitic incidents in Canada last year – the highest number ever documented since the organization started its annual audit in 1982.

“With anti-Jewish hate on the rise in Canada and around the world, it is our responsibility to ensure our children learn the lessons of the past and are ready to stand up against hate today,” stated Jason Nixon, Alberta Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services. “Antisemitism has no place in our communities and must always be unequivocally condemned. To the Jewish community, you are not alone – Alberta’s government stands in solidarity with you against all forms of hate and oppression.”

As part of its ongoing commitment to fight antisemitism, Alberta's government is investing \$200,000 to support the Calgary Jewish Federation and Jewish Federation of Edmonton. Both federations play an important role in educating Albertans about Jewish culture and building a vibrant, engaged and connected Jewish community in the province.

“The Jewish Federation of Edmonton extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Alberta for their unwavering support of the Jewish community in the face of an alarming rise in antisemitism,” stated Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO, The Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

“This generous grant is a beacon of hope in fostering resilience among Jewish Albertans. We appreciate the Government of Alberta's strong commitment to addressing antisemitism and demonstrating leadership on this issue.”

Over the past several years, Alberta's government has continued to stand with the Jewish community against antisemitism. Holocaust education is now a

mandatory component of the Alberta's social studies curriculum and Alberta's government formally endorses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism. A variety of programs and supports have also been introduced to help fight hate and bias-motivated crimes across the province. This includes law enforcement resources such as the Hate Crime Coordination Unit and funding for security improvements and risk mitigation so Albertans can gather and worship in peace.

“Calgary Jewish Federation is deeply grateful to the Government of Alberta for this important support in combating antisemitism,” stated Rob Nagus, CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation. “This grant is not only an investment in the safety and well-being of our community, but also a clear statement that hate and intolerance have no place in our province.”

This investment supports the federations' efforts to fight antisemitism through education and promotion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. This includes scholarships, educational and training materials for teachers and students, engagement sessions with government and law enforcement agencies, and an Alberta conference focused on antisemitism.

“We are pleased to see this meaningful commitment from the Government of Alberta to stand with the Jewish community and support the Calgary and Edmonton Jewish Federations,” added Richard Marceau, vice president, external communications and general counsel, Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

A discussion about Indigeneity



Last month Jewish advocate Ben Freeman was in Edmonton at the UofA discussing Jewish Indigeneity, resilience, identity and antisemitism. Freeman was welcomed to Treaty 6 territory by Chief Victor Buffalo and Elder Rick Lightning. The event was hosted by Federation, Hillel, Allied Voices for Israel, Wirth Institute and CMJ Canada. (Federation photo).

"At a time of rising antisemitism, we must all work together to ensure Alberta remains a safe and welcoming place for Jewish life to thrive. We thank the Government of Alberta for their ongoing support."

Albertans are encouraged to report antisemitic incidents to B'nai Brith Canada's Anti-Hate Hotline at 1-844-218-2624, reportanincident@bnaibrith.ca, through the Anti-Hate app, or by visiting its website.

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Noa Argamani and Shai Davidai will be in Edmonton on June 18

By AJNews staff

On June 18, JNF Edmonton and Israel Magen Fund of Canada will welcome two inspirational and highly acclaimed guests to the Negev Gala. Former Israeli hostage Noa Argamani and Columbia University Professor Shai Davidai will be in attendance at the Negev Gala to discuss the impact that the horrific events of October 7 had on their lives and the lives of Jewish people in Israel, the United States, Canada and around the world. The ripple effect of that tragic day is phenomenal; over 3000 terrorists invaded Israel, murdered 1200 people in a most brutal way and kidnapped some 251 hostages. Even today, a year and a half later, 59 hostages are still being held captive in deplorable conditions in Gaza by Hamas and other terror groups – twenty-four of whom are believed to be alive. The invasion sparked a terrible war in Gaza that has resulted in death and destruction in Gaza and upheaval in both Northern and Southern Israel.

Noa Argamani was held hostage for 245 days in Gaza before she was rescued by IDF soldiers. Since then, she has become an important advocate for the release of the remaining hostages. She has courageously spoken out, developed a large platform and regularly met with world leaders to push for their release.

So great is her platform that she has been included along with several other Jewish people in *Time Magazine's* 100 "Most Influential" list this year.

Her inclusion – in the "Titans" section of the annual list – points to the ongoing significance of Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel and its aftermath.

Argamani was rescued from Hamas captivity last summer, eight months after video of her abduction from the Nova music festival became a symbol of the Hamas attack on Israel. Since then, Argamani has championed the release of the remaining hostages.

"I'm deeply honoured to be included in the TIME 100 list and grateful that this recognition continues to shine a light on the hostage crisis and the horrific attacks of October 7th," Argamani tweeted. "It's a powerful reminder of the urgent need to keep speaking out."

The *Time Magazine* segment on Argamani was penned by Doug Emhoff. In it he states, "The video of Noa Argamani on Oct. 7, 2023, is forever seared into my soul. She was joyfully dancing with so many others at the Nova music festival when Hamas launched its brutal terrorist attack. As she was kidnapped into Gaza on a motorcycle, her harrowing expression became a symbol of the pain and trauma Jews worldwide, myself included, continue to feel."

Noa has referred to her captivity as 'a pure hell.' Since her rescue, she has shown extraordinary courage and humanity in speaking out for the remaining hostages, including her partner Avinatan Or who is still being held in the tunnels of Gaza.

Emhoff wrote that he stands with Noa in her call for the release of all the remaining hostages, "Noa's advocacy has illuminated Hamas' extreme brutality, but more importantly, her bravery has embodied Jewish resilience and strength even in the worst moments. She is living proof to the world that, despite everything, 'we will dance again.'"

Argamani wrote in response, "Thank you for your kind words – and for capturing my story with such care and compassion. Most of all, thank you for echoing our call: bring them all home. We won't stop until they are. And yes, we will dance again."

June 18th is an opportunity to come together in Edmonton as a community in support of a transformative project that is near and dear to Noa, a therapeutic rehabilitation center.

Shai Davidai gained prominence for criticizing Columbia University's response to campus antisemitism. He was an early and outspoken critic of their approach to anti-Israel protests after October 7 and condemned the university for allowing "pro-terror" student demonstrations that threatened the safety of Jewish students.

"Shai has kept the hostages at the forefront of all advocacy," says Jay Cairns, executive director of JNF Edmonton. "He's a Jewish superhero, one of the leaders of the modern Jewish civil rights movement." Having met Professor Davidai at a conference, Jay wanted to give Jewish Edmonton an opportunity to meet and hear his message and passion in person.

"From the tunnels of Gaza to the hallways of Universities - we see more and more each day the connections between these two very different worlds and the ability for Hamas to mobilize and spread their pre-fabricated narrative, globally and so quickly," adds Cairns.

In the days that followed October 7 Shai was a light unto the darkness. "The massacre made every Israeli a little bit more Jewish and every Jew in the diaspora a little bit more Israeli," said Shai.

Join the Edmonton Jewish community on June 18 at the Negev Gala to meet and hear from these remarkable advocates. The evening will begin at 5:30 pm with a VIP cocktail and dinner reception. An official program will begin at 7:30 pm followed by dessert.

By attending the Negev Gala, you are directly contributing to the establishment of the Ashdod



Former hostage Noa Argamani addressed the UN Security Council in Feb. 2025.

Rehabilitation and Therapy Centre. There are multiple ways to show your support of this project and also take advantage of this amazing opportunity to hear these dynamic speakers.

General Admission Tickets cost \$125 per ticket and include the program and dessert.

The cost for young adults is \$72 and students \$36.

A VIP Dinner & Event Package costs \$500 per ticket and includes an exclusive meet & greet event, dinner, and the program plus dessert.

"Join us on June 18, 2025, for a night of hope, healing, and inspiring messages about how we move forward, from some of the current leaders of Jewish civil rights movement," says Cairns.

"Buy your tickets today and be part of something truly life-changing."

To reserve your tickets or become a sponsor, visit jnfedmonton.ca or call 780-481-7881.

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Noa Argamani

Rescued Hostage

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Shai Davidai is an Israeli-American Professor at Columbia University, a modern day warrior for Jewish civil rights, boldly confronting antisemitism on the front lines of academia. In an era when Zionism is under siege and Jewish students in the diaspora feel increasingly isolated, Shai's voice is a rallying cry for courage, truth, and unwavering Jewish pride.

Noa Argamani was kidnapped with her partner, Avinatan, by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and held captive in Gaza for 245 days. Noa's story is one of unimaginable hardship, strength, and unyielding hope. Her daring rescue by Israeli forces in June 2024 was a moment of triumph, and her journey continues as an advocate for the hostages that remain in Gaza.

VIP DINNER PACKAGE 5:30PM COCKTAILS
6:00PM DINNER RECEPTION

GENERAL EVENT 7:30PM PROGRAMME
FOLLOWED BY DESSERT

JNF CANADA

ISRAEL MAGEN FUND OF CANADA

The Israel Magen Fund of Canada (IMFoC) is a Canadian registered charity founded in 2008. Following October 7, 2023, IMFoC has mobilized to support vital search and rescue efforts, mental and physical health, and social services for impacted communities in Israel. JNF Canada is proud to collaborate with IMFoC on this initiative to address this critical charitable need.

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Should a student conceal details about Jewish identity when applying to a Canadian university?

By Mitchell Consky, Canadian Jewish News

Jewish students recently applying to undergraduate and graduate programs across Canada have been facing an unsettling dilemma.

It involves wondering whether or not to disclose a specific aspect of their identities.

Joanne Gould, a Toronto-based university application consultant, has seen a sharp rise in students questioning whether to downplay their involvement in Jewish and pro-Israel organizations, fearing potential antisemitism or anti-Israel bias from admission committees.

“More and more students and their parents are asking me about this,” she told The Canadian Jewish News. “I can’t really say that anybody has ever asked me these questions before Oct. 7. The fact that they are so concerned is shocking, but I get it.”

Despite these concerns, Gould – who advises high school and undergraduate students on all elements of applications – encourages applicants to remain authentic.

“I advise kids to be who they are. I don’t tell them to hide,” she said, adding that universities, particularly in Canada, evaluate extracurriculars based on leadership and impact rather than religious or cultural affiliation.

“Schools like Ivey Business School, Queen’s Commerce, Rotman (School of Management), and UofT are generally not looking at where you get your extracurriculars from,” she noted. “About 98 percent of these schools mostly look at marks.”

Noting that undergraduate programs prioritize academic performance, Gould does not discourage students from highlighting Jewish-based extracurriculars: “It’s about leadership and commitment, not the name of the organization.”

Students graduating from day schools also don’t have the option of omitting their background. “The transcript shows they are coming from a Jewish education anyway,” she pointed out.

The Canadian Jewish News contacted Toronto’s TanenbaumCHAT for comment on how students are approaching applications amid concerns about antisemitic bias, but the school declined to respond.

Gray Academy of Jewish Education in Winnipeg, however, says Grade 12 students applying to universities have not voiced concern.

“Our faculty really hasn’t seen this type of hesitancy or fear regarding Jewish identity when applying to schools,” replied Andrea Ritter, the school’s director

of marketing and communications.

Admission process and safeguards

Adrienne Shnier, CEO of Apply Yourself Global, an international application consultation organization, has also observed wide hesitation among Jewish students when it comes to highlighting their religious and cultural affiliations. A Jewish faculty member at York University’s School of Health Policy and Management, as well as at the university’s School of Global Health and Faculty of Graduate Studies, Shnier has served on multiple graduate admissions committees for Canadian universities since 2011. She acknowledges that students are afraid of bias influencing admissions decisions.

“The concerns are that they’re not going to get in basically if there’s a sniff of them being Jewish,” she said. “I see a lot of really amazing involvement and really impactful involvement that students just don’t want to talk about. But this is years of their lives and hard work that they’re forfeiting the ability to showcase.”

Shnier stresses, however, that while bias may exist among individual faculty members, there are institutional safeguards to prevent it from affecting admissions decisions.

“Admissions committees are made up of faculty at the program, maybe a chair or a dean, and one or two student representatives. Every application is reviewed by more than one person, sometimes three or more,” she explained. “In order for an application to be decided on, the majority of those people need to agree. Even if there is a faculty member who may have supported antisemitic viewpoints, there are other representatives who can balance that out.”

Additionally, members must justify any rejection in writing.

“You can’t just say reject, reject, reject with no justification,” Shnier noted. “Every review is based on merit. You have to demonstrate why an application is not competitive.”



Scrubbing affiliation with Israeli institutions

Despite these institutional safeguards, concerns about anti-Israel bias in admission committees are especially pronounced for Jewish students graduating from Israeli universities. One Jewish medical student applying to Canadian and U.S. residency programs, who asked to remain anonymous, described his “active process” of removing Jewish affiliations from his application.

“There’s been a lot of wariness and a lot of concern,” he said. “When you apply, especially coming from an Israeli medical school, there’s this fear of bias—whether implicit or explicit—coming from acceptance committees. I was afraid of being overlooked. I was on edge throughout the whole application process.”

Despite his extensive experience with Israeli medical institutions, the student—who has a recognizably Jewish last name—deliberately omitted those details.

“I cleaned my application of any mention of Jewish or pro-Israel organizations,” he said. “I didn’t use any of the doctors I engaged with in Israel, even though a lot of my work heavily came from Israel and Jewish doctors.”

He also mentioned hesitancy with citing some of his research projects due to their connection to Israeli hospitals, and chose to emphasize his clinical work tied to North American institutions.

This student was recently admitted into a Canadian residency program.

Application strategy: Focus on leadership, not labels or politics

For students worried about bias, Shnier advises focusing on leadership and impact.

“You leave politics and positions out of it,” she said. “Frame your experience solely around the impact your role has had. Maybe you helped students find their voices and feel empowered. Maybe you provided a safe space for students on campus. Maybe you organized panels or events. These are all things that have nothing to do with the positions of Hillel or any other organization.”

As the war in Gaza exacerbates divisions on Canadian campuses, both Gould and Shnier strongly advise against inserting political viewpoints into application essays.

“Canadian applications really don’t have a place to put in politics,” Gould said. “Admission committees are looking for the quality of your extracurriculars, not your personal beliefs.”

Diversity and census concerns

Loren Cohen, a Jewish graduate school applicant, was startled to find a question about religion on her application for Ontario teachers colleges. “They actually asked on the application, which I was shocked about, what your religion is,” she said. “I didn’t think that they were technically allowed to ask you.” Cohen has always been open about her Jewish identity in her personal and professional life, but she hesitated when filling out the form.

“I actually chose not to say on the application because I didn’t want it to affect me getting the education I want.”

The Ontario Universities’ Application Centre (OUAC) includes an optional Applicant Diversity

Continued on page 22

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Your bridge to Jewish Edmonton



A MESSAGE FROM CEO STACEY LEAVITT-WRIGHT

This poignant season in the Jewish calendar reminds us of the strength, resilience, and beauty of our shared heritage. In the span of just a few days, we commemorate Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance day), Yom Hazikaron (Israel's memorial day) and Yom Haatzmaut (Israel's independence day). These occasions are more than symbolic—they are the beating heart of our collective memory and identity.

Yom Hashoah urges us to never forget. We honour the six million Jews lost in the Holocaust and recommit ourselves to the fight against antisemitism and hate. Yom Hazikaron brings our thoughts to the brave women and men who have given their lives in defense of the State of Israel, and to those killed in terror attacks. And then, in a powerful emotional turn, Yom Ha'atzmaut invites all to mark Israel's 77th birthday this year—with joy, pride and unity.

These meaningful and memorable days

remind us of the vital role of community and our deep bonds with Israel. I encourage you to attend all our upcoming events, made possible through the efforts of volunteers along with our staff team. Your presence strengthens our unified voice, honours those we remember and celebrate, and is a thank you to our organizers.

Let us take inspiration from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z"l, "We carry the past with us for as long as the Jewish people exist...We live for what they died for, by walking tall as Jews, showing we are not afraid, refusing to be intimidated by the antisemitism that has returned, or the sustained assault on Israel."

This season also marks the return of our annual Edmonton Jewish Film festival, a powerful celebration of stories, identity and creativity. This vibrant cultural experience invites you to laugh, cry, and connect with the rich diversity of global Jewish life.

Bring your friends and family. We will use the proceeds to create a gesher chai—a living bridge—in the Partnership2Gether program, connecting our community, youth, and residents of the Galilee panhandle.

And looking ahead, I'm thrilled to share the latest updates on the new Jewish Community Centre. We have established a base construction concept that is now moving to the phase of detailed architectural drawings. We are excited to reveal these with you at a "show and tell" on June 20. This project is about more than just a building; it's about creating a better future for Jewish people in our community. It will be a space to gather, learn, play, and grow for generations to come.

Let us honour our past, celebrate our present, and invest in our future—together.

Reach out to us on social media or by emailing info@edjfed.org.

JCC information session

Come and view the floor plans for the new Jewish Community Centre

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B’nai Brith Calgary Dinner celebrates excellence

By Irena Karshenbaum

On April 2nd, close to six hundred guests gathered for the 72nd annual B’nai Brith Calgary Dinner honouring Premier of Alberta, Danielle Smith, and former Ambassador of Canada to Israel, Vivian Bercovici. Writer and producer for the television show, *The Simpsons*, and Calgary native, Joel Cohen, entertained guests as MC. The evening was made especially moving with Dr. Robert Barsky, the longest serving B’nai Brith Calgary president, receiving the Ben Docktor Award of Excellence.

The event was a family affair. Not only was Dr. Barsky’s family in the audience, but so were Premier Smith’s parents, Sharon and Doug Smith, along with Bercovici’s daughter as well as her meting for the first time that evening a possible “cousin,” one of the dinner guests, noted Canadian military historian, Dr. David Bercuson. Both draw their roots from Romania and both share the same last name – Bercuson was once Bercovici.

Danielle Smith has deep, and mostly not well known, ties to Calgary’s Jewish community. Long before she was Premier of Alberta, Smith visited Israel, had Shabbat lunch at the home of the House of Jacob’s rabbi, attended numerous Beit Halochem concerts, watched a 1930s Molly Picon movie – in Yiddish with English subtitles – at Beth Tzedec Congregation, was a gold-level sponsor of the grand opening of the Little Synagogue and served as a media relations volunteer for that event. She can count numerous friends in the community, this author included.

Aside from the dinner being a return to a community Premier Smith knows well, she brought a message the event’s guests needed to hear.

Smith acknowledged the work of B’nai Brith stating that, “your goal has been to build a safer, fairer and freer society not only for the Jewish people, but also as a champion for the rights of all marginalized people. You understand that our nation cannot allow antisemitism or any form of hate to take root. It weakens democracy from within and undermines the values that Canada is built on. Either everyone is secure, or no one is, and you never hesitate to remind Canadians of this truth.”

Smith discussed the encampments on university campuses since October 7 with Alberta being “different” on account of the police in both Calgary and Edmonton, along with members of the board of governors of the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta who, “enforced the law and did



The B’nai Brith Calgary Dinner Committee pictured with the honourees. Left to right: Jerry Spevakow, Joel Grotsky, Harold Lipton, Irena Karshenbaum, Stacy Shaikin, Dr. Robert Barsky, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, Vivian Bercovici, Sharon Smith, Doug Smith, Joel Zimmerman, Rob Rothstein, Bev Sklar, Howard Silver. Photo by: Ron Switzer.

not allow trespass. They created a very safe environment for the Jewish students on campus.”

Smith stated, “Albertans do not apologize for doing what is right. We will not be swayed by the shouting of a tiny minority of radicals and we will never turn away from Israel. Alberta is, and always will be, a home for the Jewish people.”

Smith acknowledged that since October 7, Canada has seen a dramatic rise in schools and synagogues being attacked and intimidation on Jewish communities, and said, “Alberta’s government will never let antisemitism go unchallenged. We will always condemn terrorism and hate and we will always keep Jewish communities safe.” She explained that the provincial government has increased funding for security and officer presence at faith-based organizations and encouraged organizations that need extra protection to apply for these grants.

Toronto-born Bercovici noted that this federal election was the most critical election of her life and said, “The situation in Canada is being watched with great interest in Israel.” She explained that the foreign policy and business communities know that the fourth largest Jewish community in the world – after Israel, United States and France – is under attack and they

are “really, deeply concerned.”

Stating antisemitism is raging all over the world since October 7, “We here and everywhere need to start making more noise. In the UK and Australia, they punch way above their weight. We are too polite.”

Bercovici recounted how she recently attended anti-Israel, pro-Hamas protests in Berlin and compared the experience to attending the same type of protests in Toronto explaining, “In Berlin, the police, they protect us and they care. In Toronto, I felt very differently. We really have to wake up.”

Bercovici who served for two and a half years as Canada’s ambassador to Israel and remained in the country after her assignment ended, described leading a vibrant life as a private citizen first in Tel Aviv before moving, in 2024, to a kibbutz near Sderot, close to the Gaza strip, “Which has been pummelled by rockets.” This kibbutz took in all of the 140 displaced families from Kibbutz Kfar Aza that was attacked on October 7.

She explained that the real danger in Israel is, “internal and that October 7 shattered everything about the country, the people’s belief in themselves.

Continued on page 20

Passover Seder celebration at Calgary Jewish Academy



Calgary Jewish Academy students, staff members, families and friends gathered for a wonderful model Passover Seder that commemorated the traditional holiday and at the same celebrated the values of community, family and learning.

Holocaust Memorial Site

Cont. from page 1

The Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the traditional time when community members visit cemeteries to honour the memories of loved ones at *Kever Avot* services conducted by local Rabbis. Those services typically happen early in the day, allowing for a dedication and ceremony at the upgraded Calgary Holocaust Memorial Park later the same day (watch for details in future issues of *AJNews* and on the Calgary Jewish Federation website, www.jewishcalgary.org).

Professionals who will bring the Calgary Holocaust Memorial Upgrade Project to fruition include award-winning designer and Certified Landscape Designer Katherine Kinch, founder of Your Space by Design; project manager Tony Sunderland; Contractor Ryan Menzies, of Alpine Construction and Design Ltd; and Lorne Tucker, of Somerville Memorials.

The project has the support of both the JCC and the Calgary Jewish Federation, thanks to efforts by CJF President Lisa Libin and former CEO Adam Silver.

The emotionally compelling bronze sculpture *Ashes to Life*, by renowned artist Roy Leadbeater will remain at the heart of the newly imagined Holocaust Memorial. Both the Memorial and the sculpture – which attests to the fact that the spirit of the Jewish people can never be extinguished – were donated to the Jewish community of Calgary in 1986 by William (Bill) Schwartz and Alyse Schwartz, each of blessed memory, in memory of their parents Louis and Regina Schwartz and Isaac and Celia Schwartzpelz.

Dedicated on November 2, 1986, the Memorial site – where this community’s annual Yom HaShoah commemorations have been held for nearly 40 years – has been re-envisioned as an ideal location to bring Calgary and area students for Holocaust education and reflection say Bondar and Libin, each of whom is the granddaughter of four Holocaust survivors.

“The symbolic elements of the *Ashes to Life* statue provide jumping-off points for discussions about the Shoah that engage students from the get-go,” says Marnie Bondar. “The entire memorial space, from the colours of the stones on which students will sit to the materials used on the ground, have been carefully considered so as to recall Europe, reinforce the solemnity of the Holocaust, and allow for emotional connections that encourage active rather than passive learning.”

Segregated spaces for reflection and learning will underscore the sacredness of the space, which will include 18 stone “Pillars of Learning” including the names of some of the European cities, towns and shtetls where victims of the Shoah and local survivors lived, allowing for additional learning opportunities.

Formalized pathways and beautiful plantings will round out the reimagined space which will be brought into harmony with other spaces within the JCC footprint including the JCC daycare, which will get a new barrier wall.

While Holocaust education often takes place within the walls of schools and other civic institutions, there are obvious benefits to inviting non-Jewish junior high and high school students into the heart of the Jewish community.

“Bringing students to the JCC will help them to see that the Jewish people survived and thrived,” said Libin. “They will find themselves in the heart of a living and vibrant community.”

Spearheading the fundraising for the enhanced and expanded memorial site has proven a full-circle journey for Ron and Barb Krell, who were the driving force behind the establishment of this community’s annual Holocaust Education Symposium in 1984. Ron is a second-generation survivor. Like his parents, of blessed memory, his brother Dr. Robert Krell – co-founder of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre – is a Holocaust survivor.

The costs associated with Phase I of the project have been generously underwritten by Ron and Barb Krell and family, Harvey Cyngiser and family, Frances Cyngiser and family, and the Legacy Fund.

A very important aspect of the project, say the Krells, is the establishment of an endowment fund that will ensure perpetual care of the memorial site, including landscape maintenance, lighting, cleaning, repairs, and additions to the memorial walls. Community members are encouraged to support the endowment fund, which, like the flow-through fund earmarked for the construction and beautification at the memorial site, is managed by the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary.

The significance of Holocaust memorials and monuments has long been studied as have been the links between commemorating and remembering communities. As communities evolve, it is important to ensure that each memorial continues to be utilized in a way that speaks to the hearts and minds of new generations.

Jewish Calgary’s revitalized memorial “will allow for...self-directed and facilitator-led learning,” according to organizers of the project. “Education will include exploratory, research-based and project-based education with debriefing materials to be sent back to classrooms with their teachers.”

A dearth of seating at the original Holocaust Memorial site has – until now – limited the number of students that could be comfortably accommodated for on-site study. The new design includes two semi-circular flat-topped boulders that can seat up to 75 students.

Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin – who are responsible for ensuring that the design plans maximize the educational potential of the project –



The *Ashes to Life* sculpture will remain a focal point at the Calgary Holocaust Memorial site, where an ambitious upgrade project is set to begin this month following Yom HaShoah.

take much inspiration in the words of renowned author Aharon Appelfeld, himself a Holocaust survivor:

“After the death of the last witnesses the memory of the Holocaust must not be left to historians alone, now is the time for works of art.”

Those wishing to support perpetual care of the Calgary Holocaust Memorial can direct donations to the Calgary Holocaust Memorial Maintenance Endowment Fund (managed by the Jewish Community Foundation of Calgary (JCFC). Contact Foundation Manager Brenda Sapoznikow at 403-640-2273 or mail@jcfc.ca.

Holocaust survivors and their loved ones will soon have the opportunity to become involved in the Phase II Holocaust Survivor/Memorial Wall Tribute Project. For more information about supporting this initiative and adding names to it, contact Marnie Bondar and Dahlia Libin at holocaustedu@jewishcalgary.org.

For more information about additional philanthropic opportunities in support of Holocaust remembrance and education, contact Ron Krell at krells@shaw.ca.

Maxine Fischbein is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



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Vote for a pro-Israel, pro-peace, pro-democracy future.

By JSpace Canada

Advance voting was open from April 18 – 21 and April 17 marked the 43rd anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a defining moment in our nation’s commitment to democracy, equality, and justice.

It’s a powerful reminder that our freedoms aren’t simply inherited, they are safeguarded through vigilance, active participation, and shared responsibility. Making a plan to vote is one of the most effective ways to protect and strengthen those freedoms.

As the federal election enters its final weeks, the stakes feel higher than ever. For many, this election is more than a contest of policies, it’s a referendum on identity, values, and the kind of country we want to be. Tensions are rising. Candidates are framed as either saviours or existential threats. But amid the noise, we need clarity and a recommitment to democratic principles.

The French and English leaders’ debates this week made clear that Canada’s foreign policy, including our role in Israel-Palestine, is part of the public conversation. And rightfully so.

Canada has long been viewed as a peacekeeping nation. That reputation has faded in recent years, but

it’s not beyond recovery. Our relationship with Israel has historically been rooted in shared democratic values. But as Israel’s government takes troubling steps toward authoritarianism and theocracy, Canada must ask: do those shared values still hold? If not, what actions can we take to preserve and promote the principles we claim to stand for?

The post-WWII international order, the Charter, and Canadian law all affirm that democracy, human rights, and equality must be defended - not selectively, but universally. If we truly believe in the rule of law, we must be prepared to apply it consistently, even when it is politically uncomfortable.

This conversation is deeply complex, particularly for Canadian Jews. Many of us were raised to see Israel not only as a homeland but as a pillar of our identity. In our communities and education, criticism of Israel was often treated as betrayal, or even as antisemitism. That legacy shapes how many of us react to this moment.

But let’s be clear: criticism of a government is not inherently antisemitic. Even the most committed pro-Israel organizations acknowledge this. The more difficult, and essential, question is: where does criticism of Israel cross the line into antisemitism?

We should all agree that conflating all Jews with the actions of the Israeli state is antisemitic. And yet, some

of the very leaders who make that argument also conflate criticism of Israeli leaders with attacks on the Jewish people, as we saw in reactions to the ICC arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant. These warrants, whether one agrees with them or not, target politicians who hold power and the agency to make decisions in accordance with, or defiance of, international law and rules of war. This is very different than targeting a nation, or the everyday citizens of that nation.

At the same time, many voices critical of Israel fail to acknowledge how their language and arguments can echo antisemitic tropes—or slide into outright discrimination. And even when rhetoric isn’t antisemitic, targeting people based on nationality or political identity violates the very rights and freedoms the Charter enshrines. Discrimination of any kind, whether based on religion, ethnicity, or political belief, undermines the democratic values we claim to uphold.

Unfortunately, none of the major parties or leaders have successfully handled these conversations with the nuance and empathy they demand. Part of the problem lies in the binary narratives dominating political advocacy—portraying Canadian Jews as monolithic, and the Israel-Palestine conflict as black and white.

Continued on page 18

Antisemitism *Cont. from page 2*

wished the Nazis had “murdered all of you.”

Also in May, an arsonist attempted to burn down the Schara Tzedec Synagogue in Vancouver, igniting a fire at the entrance as evening prayers were ending.

In another May incident, shots were fired at a Jewish girls’ school in Toronto. The school was subsequently targeted twice more by gunfire in 2024.

In June, a suspect on a motorcycle lobbed stones at two Toronto-area synagogues, damaging glass panels.

In mid-June, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) apprehended Pascal Tribout, a Quebec man associated with white nationalist groups, who had made violent threats against Jews and was later convicted for illegally producing 3D-printed firearms.

In August, a bomb threat menaced Jewish institutions throughout the country, including synagogues, community centres and B’nai Brith Canada offices.

In July, the RCMP arrested a father and son in connection with an ISIS-inspired plot to allegedly

murder Jews in the Greater Toronto Area.

From September to December, 2024, individuals associated with a neo-Nazi movement originating in Russia, the Maniac Murder Cult (MKY), perpetrated various antisemitic acts in Winnipeg, including graffiti containing the Hakenkreuz and other sorts of vandalism. Police later charged one member, alleged to be responsible for numerous acts of antisemitic vandalism at several locations in the city, with terrorism-related offences.

In December, an arsonist firebombed Congregation Beth Tikvah, in Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Montreal, in the second such attack at the location in the wake of Oct. 7, 2023.

These staggering statistics and disturbing incidents are consistent with trends B’nai Brith Canada observed at the end of 2023, when its Audit accounted for a spike in antisemitic incidents in the aftermath of the Hamas-led Oct. 7 terrorist attacks on Israel.

The Gaza-based terrorists’ barbaric rampage, the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, triggered an unprecedented surge in antisemitic

incidents around the world. As the Israel-Hamas war continued to escalate throughout 2024, its events became a point of focus for radical actors seeking to foment hate against Jews in Canada.

“The atrocities of Oct. 7, 2023, opened deep fissures in Canadian society,” said Robertson. “The subsequent rise in antisemitism has exposed a disturbing undercurrent of Jew-hatred driven by a virulent, radicalized minority.”

The war in the Middle East, and the harrowing struggle to release the Israeli hostages Hamas abducted on Oct. 7, 2023, cast a dark shadow over Jewish life in Canada in 2024. Across the country, the volume of incidents tended to fluctuate in accordance with the pace or intensity of fighting in Gaza or Lebanon, as during the Rafah Offensive in May, which coincided with the wave of encampments on Canadian university campuses. At the same time, various neo-Nazi and white nationalist groups, such as the Goyim Defense League, engaged in largely unrelated antisemitic activities throughout 2024, contributing to a sizeable fraction of the cases B’nai Brith Canada documented in the Audit.

Across the board, antisemitic actors tended to make use of novel technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, a phenomenon B’nai Brith Canada also observed in 2023. Several provinces, including Quebec and Alberta, registered notable jumps in the total number of antisemitic incidents since 2023. As in previous years, Ontario retained the highest number of reported incidents, although it was a 26 percent decrease from 2023.

“Lessons that should have been learned after 2023 must be learned without further delay,” Robertson said. “Many Canadian Jews remain fearful and concerned about the future of Jewish life in this country. As a nation, we must reject the antisemitic fringe and relegate this virulent, hateful minority to the shadows.”

The regional breakdown of antisemitic incidents in 2024 was Quebec: 1,651 incidents (215.7 % Increase), Ontario: 1,782 incidents (-25.8 % Decrease), Manitoba & Saskatchewan: 447 incidents (33.4 % Increase), British Columbia: 671 (44.3 % Increase), Alberta: 916 incidents (160.2 % Increase) and Atlantic Canada: 179 incidents (53 % Increase).

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A wonderful PJ Chocolate Seder at the Paperny Family JCC



Over 150 kids and their families gathered for a sweet and interactive Chocolate Seder, hosted by Calgary PJ Library and the Paperny Family JCC. Using chocolate treats to represent traditional Seder elements, participants engaged with the Passover story in a fun and delicious way. The event featured singing, tasting, and celebrating as families enjoyed a Seder like no other — one chocolate bite at a time! (Facebook photos).

CAMP BB-RIBACK is NOW HIRING Camp Director (full time, year-round)



Located on Pine Lake Alberta, Camp BB-Riback is a Jewish summer camp that believes that every child is unique and deserves the opportunity to experience a full, enriching summer. This is a full time, year-round position that requires living onsite at camp throughout the summer season. A competitive total compensation package is offered.

Overview of Camp-Director

Reporting to the Camp BB-Riback Board of Directors, the Camp Director is responsible for all camp-related operations and activities, including community engagement, management of the facilities, food service, staff, and programs. This is a senior management position that partners closely with the Board of Directors on strategic priorities, long range plans, growth models, and fundraising.

The primary focus areas of this role are camper enrollment and community engagement, operations, and people leadership. The Camp Director will serve as the face of Camp BB-Riback in the community. This position will also lead recruiting efforts to hire and onboard a staff of 70+ seasonal employees.

This person will have a meaningful impact on building the Camp BB-Riback culture and community and will be an influential voice in the future of camp. If you are a camp professional with a proven track record in operations, this is the job for you.

What You'll Do

Year-round Activity includes: Camper Recruitment & Marketing, Fundraising & Development, Nonprofit Business Operations, and Camp Operations.

Seasonal Activity includes:

- Oversee youth summer camp operations for 200+ kids in 2 sessions from July-August, as well as additional camp activities or rentals during the summer season (May – end of August).
- Coordinate logistics and set up the site to accommodate the needs of activities.
- Lead a team of seasonal staff members including housekeepers, maintenance workers, kitchen crew, medical personnel, assistant directors, program leaders, and counsellors.
- Oversee general appearance and upkeep of camp facilities. Ensure safety and cleanliness of grounds at all times. Partner with maintenance teams to make repairs.
- Conduct routine inventory and procurement of supplies.
- Work with infirm staff to manage camper records and log incident reports.
- Oversee all camp program related travel for participants and camp staff.
- Responsible for opening and closing of camp, equipment upkeep, records management, and end-of-season reporting.

Minimum Qualifications

- Must be able to live onsite at camp in Pine Lake, AB for the summer season and reliably commute throughout the year as needed (middle of May- end of August)
- 4+ years of year-round leadership experience in a nonprofit organization or camp setting. Residential camping experience preferred.
- Experience with business operations & administration, marketing and social media and fundraising / non-profit development.

For a full job description or to apply:
contact chair@campbb.com or visit www.campbb.com



The **Calgary Jewish Academy (CJA)** is a Jewish Day school that was founded in 1987 as a result of the amalgamation of the Calgary Hebrew School (1912) and the I.L. Peretz School (1927). The CJA has over a century-long legacy educating children who have and will continue to shape the future of Calgary, Canada and beyond. From Nursery through to Grade 9, CJA provides a safe, supportive and challenging environment. Their goal is to explore with students the concepts of Jewish community, identity as well as put Jewish values and beliefs into action. CJA students are challenged in a rigorous dual curriculum program focused on Alberta Curriculum and Judaic Studies.

CJA is seeking a new leader for the role of **Head of School**. The Head of School will be the driving force behind the institution's vision, ensuring its continued growth, sustainability, and academic excellence. This leader will work in close partnership with the Board of Directors, providing strategic guidance and operational oversight while cultivating an inspiring and innovative educational environment. With a commitment to Jewish values and educational excellence, the Head of School will spearhead curriculum development, faculty leadership, and financial stewardship to build a thriving and future-focused institution. This individual will serve as the ambassador of CJA, strengthening relationships with students, parents, educators, donors, and community leaders to foster a culture of engagement, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

The ideal candidate will possess a Master's degree in Education, Administration, or a related field and have a minimum of ten years of leadership experience in an educational setting, including senior administrative roles. The successful candidate will have strong financial acumen, with experience in budget management and fundraising, a visionary and strategic mindset, and the ability to build strong community relationships.

Janet Soles and Associates has been retained to conduct this search on behalf of the Calgary Jewish Academy. For more information about this opportunity or to apply, please send your curriculum vitae and letter of interest with the Subject Line – "Head of School – CJA" in confidence to apply@jssearch.ca.

community calendar

Want to know what's going on in Jewish Calgary?
Check out the Community Calendar at jewishcalgary.org

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





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jewishcalgary.org



A MESSAGE FROM ROB NAGUS

Dear Community Members,

As we look ahead to the upcoming federal election, it's clear that this moment is incredibly consequential – not just for Canada as a whole, but for the Jewish community in particular.

We are living through a time of rapid political and social change. The decisions made by our next government will have a lasting impact on our community, our values, and our future. That's why Calgary Jewish Federation (CJF) is committed to helping you stay informed, engaged, and empowered throughout this election season.

As CJF, our non-profit status requires us to be non-partisan, however we believe deeply in the importance of civic engagement. That's why we have been offering programming to help our community understand the issues and find meaningful ways to get involved.

We're also proud to support our national partner CIJA (Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs) in their *More Than Just a Vote* campaign – a vital initiative focused on amplifying Jewish voices in the democratic process. Because making an impact means more than casting a ballot. It means building relationships with decision-makers, speaking out on issues that matter, and showing up for our community. Find out more at cija.ca.

With CIJA, our leadership team has also been spending the last few weeks meeting with candidates in key areas across Calgary and ensuring they are aware of the important issues that currently impact our Jewish community.


For those who wish to amplify their impact, we encourage you all to learn more about CJPAC (Canadian Jewish Political Action Committee). CJPAC is a national, independent, multi-partisan

organization whose mandate is to engage Jewish Canadians and allies in the democratic process and to foster active political participation. Find out more at cjpac.ca.

As we reflect on this recent Passover, let it be a reminder to us of the journey from oppression to freedom, may we carry forward the message of liberation through active participation in the world around us.

Your voice matters. Get engaged this federal election. Be sure to count yourself in at jewishcanadavotes.ca. On April 28, let's show up – thoughtfully, proudly, and powerfully.

B'Shalom,



Rob Nagus, Chief Executive Officer
Calgary Jewish Federation

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





Hillel Calgary is the center for Jewish student life for university students in Calgary, providing a welcoming space for students to connect, explore their Jewish identity, and build lasting friendships. Whether through cultural celebrations, educational programs, or advocacy initiatives, Hillel empowers students to engage meaningfully with Jewish life on campus.

This year, Hillel has hosted a wide range of programs, from a **Tu B'Shevat Seder** to hosting a conversation on **Jewish Pride with author Ben M. Freeman**, as well as our monthly programming – such as **Bagel Lunch**, and **Jews & Brews**.

Amid challenging times for Jewish students, Hillel has also focused on advocacy and support, fostering relationships with campus administration, and creating space for students to feel safe, seen, and heard. As we look ahead, Hillel remains committed to building a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient Jewish student community in Calgary.



For more information or to get involved, please contact:
Jamie Keltz at jkeltz@jewishcalgary.org



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Jewish Calgary has now completed six years of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's (HGF) Life & Legacy program. Legacy giving supports our community and ensures donors' values, experiences, and priorities are passed on from generation to generation.

We are proud to be participating in the Life & Legacy PLUS initiative. We continue to work on bringing our community closer together and promoting a more unified and sustainable vision for the future of Jewish Calgary.

AS OF APRIL 17, 2025, THESE MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY HAVE MADE A PROMISE TO ENSURE THE FUTURE OF JEWISH CALGARY

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Rebecca Berlin	Jackie & Hayim Hamborger	Therese Nagler	Judith Shriar
Marni Besser	Annette Hanson	Donna & Jack Newton	Laura Shuler
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Marnie & Darren Bondar	Josh Hesslein	Joshua Orzech	Rebecca Silverberg
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Judy Shapiro & Richard Bronstein	Josh Inhaber	Lisa Welikovitsh & Mark Paidra	Lorraine Spector
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For more information on how you can ensure our Jewish tomorrows today, contact Director of Development, Diana Kalef at dkalef@jewishcalgary.org 403-444-3154.

Eyeing an escape route in the Trump era, these American Jews are moving to Canada

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) — A year ago, Sarah Resnick had a good job and a Jewish community she liked in New York. She gave all that up to move to Winnipeg, a city where she knew nobody, in a country where she was not a citizen, in a climate whose extremes she was not used to.

“Do I prefer walking the dog in negative -40? No,” Resnick recalled of her first winter in Winnipeg. “The life that I’m building here is different than my life in New York, but it’s just as fulfilling.”

For Resnick, the frigid Manitoba winter was preferable to the alternative: staying in the United States after Donald Trump’s reelection.

Americans, including many American Jews, have floated moving to Canada at earlier stages in the now decade-long Trump era. But now, faced with a re-elected president who has pursued increasingly draconian policies in areas including immigration, education, free speech and beyond, some say they are now hearing echoes of prewar Europe — and a siren song telling them it’s time to leave.

“It’s a really complicated situation, because the Jews are not being targeted by the administration,” said Heather Segal, a Jewish immigration lawyer based in Canada who works with clients looking to move in both directions. “But they’re feeling that the paradigm has shifted. And there’s such a fundamental cultural change, the zeitgeist has changed, that they don’t understand what’s going on in America, and that creates fear.”

Exactly how many Jews are fleeing to Canada is impossible to say, but some resources are available to those who do. The Winnipeg Jewish Federation has a program specifically to encourage Jews to immigrate there. And JIAS, the Canadian equivalent to the Jewish refugee aid group HIAS, was established in 1922 to help Jewish refugees settle in Toronto but now primarily works with other populations. (Representatives for the Winnipeg federation and for JIAS did not respond to multiple requests for comment for this article.)

Anecdotally, there does seem to be an increase. Segal previously fielded inquiries from Americans, including many Jews, looking to move to Canada in 2016 and 2020, prior to the election. But she says the current moment has brought even more interest. She estimates that she has seen a 50% increase in prospective Canadian immigrants since 2016.

“I think that when things are changing, they’re never safe for Jews, and that creating an insurance

policy is not fear-ridden,” she said. “They know this is not the America they grew up in. This is not who America is. This is not how Americans behave, that due process happens, and deportations without due process cannot be justified, that the number of executive orders are unacceptable, considering that this is a democratic nation with three branches of government.”

For Resnick, the deciding factor came before the most recent election, when the Supreme Court struck down the federal right to an abortion in 2022. “It was kind of a wake-up call to me that, regardless of who won the presidency, the Supreme Court was going to wield power in a way that I was not comfortable with,” she said.

Shortly afterwards, she recalled, she saw “Leopoldstadt,” the Tom Stoppard play about Austrian Jews before the Holocaust. “I remember... thinking to myself, ‘God, I hope that we’re not in 1930s Vienna.’ And that feels so melodramatic. I know what it sounds like hearing those words come out of my mouth,” she said.

“And yet — and yet.”

When she told her mom about her plans to move, the response could have come out of the play. “She said to me, ‘I’m too old to get out. But I’m glad that you are,’” Resnick recalled. “I do genuinely think that Holocaust generational trauma is part of that.”

In 2024, two years after beginning the process of applying for permanent residency in Canada, Resnick landed a new job with the University of Manitoba. She moved to Winnipeg in July, prior to the election. She found an apartment to rent online; her new landlord happened to be Jewish. It felt like a sign.

In hindsight, she says of her decision, “I would rather be someone who made the choice and was overreacting than someone who got stuck.”

She’s not the only one. Recently a trio of prominent scholars of fascism and totalitarianism, two of whom are Jewish, made international news when they announced they would jointly be leaving Yale University to accept positions at the University of Toronto. In part, they said, they were doing so because the U.S. was barreling toward the very thing they studied.

“You can see certain patterns. And once you see the



Sarah Resnick (right), a Jewish woman from New York, moved to Winnipeg in summer 2024 over concerns about the American political climate. (Courtesy)

patterns and you can see what’s possible, you can’t unknow what’s possible,” Marci Shore, one of the Jewish professors to make the move, said in an interview. Shore is leaving Yale along with her husband and colleague Timothy Snyder and their fellow fascism scholar Jason Stanley, who is also Jewish.

The three scholars’ move had been in the works since before Trump’s reelection. Janice Stein, the Jewish director of the University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, had been intent on recruiting them for years, Shore said. But other Jewish academics are joining them, like Chagai Weiss, an American-Israeli scholar of political science, who is also heading to the University of Toronto after a postdoc fellowship at Stanford. “Timing isn’t bad,” Weiss wrote on X in announcing his appointment.

While some interpreted the moves as indicative that the scholars are canaries in an American coal mine, others — including Jews on both sides of the border — said they disagreed with the impulse to flee.

“We are not looking at 1930s Germany here. The Trump administration is complicated (and, in my view, suboptimal) for the Jews, but Jews are not the people it’s rounding up,” Phoebe Maltz Bovy, an editor at the Canadian Jewish News and a recent American emigre herself, wrote in a recent column about the professors.

And Daniel Drezner, another Jewish scholar of global politics, asserted on his Substack that he is “not going anywhere” — though he said the arrest of a pro-Palestinian graduate student over an op-ed at Tufts University, where he is soon to become a dean, had

Continued on page 19

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Jewish News

Next Print Date:
May 22, 2025
Next Deadline:
May 16, 2025
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Edmonton Jewish Film Festival Schedule: May 6 - 15

Welcome to the 29th annual Edmonton Jewish Film Festival where Jewish perspectives come to life. From May 6 to 15, we invite you to discover, connect, and engage with us, in person and virtually.

This year, four feature films are offered in-person and there is also a virtual complement available only to Edmonton and area residents. The in-person films will be shown at the beautiful Capitol Theatre in Fort Edmonton Park. Festival passes and individual tickets can be purchased at jewishedmonton.org.

May 6 “Song of Ascent”
7 pm Capitol Theatre at Fort Edmonton Park
2024, 90 min. USA: English

The feature-length documentary/live concert film will chronicle the experiences of singer-songwriter, and culture sensation, Matisyahu since the October 7 massacre in Israel. *Song of Ascent* depicts Matisyahu's most recent US tour bookended by two meaningful trips to Israel, and follows his experience at several Kibbutzim, the Nova Festival site, hospitals, and other locations essential to bearing witness to the October 7 massacres. Throughout the film, Matisyahu puts on three large shows in Israel just before and after having three of his US tour dates canceled by anti-Israel protestors, thrusting Matisyahu into a unique role of speaking up for, and defending not just himself, but for the Jewish people during these difficult times.

Special Event - Q&A Session with the producer of Song of Ascent
May 7, Time to be confirmed

Join us for an exclusive online Q&A session with Shlomo Weprin, the producer and director of *Song of Ascent*. Shlomo, a 2008 graduate of New York University's prestigious Tisch School of the Arts, splits his time between New York and Tel Aviv. He previously served as an associate producer for the Jewish Channel, where he co-wrote, produced, shot, and edited short films addressing issues facing the Jewish community. Currently, Shlomo is the president and founder of Shlomotions, a production company known for its creative video content and impressive client list.

May 8 “The Stronghold”
7 pm Capitol Theatre at Fort Edmonton Park
113 minutes. Drama: Israel
Hebrew with English subtitles

The Stronghold is a gripping movie that dramatizes a true story about an IDF outpost that suffered heavy losses in the Yom Kippur War. After sustaining a surprise attack, a desolate Israeli outpost falls under siege. While the surviving soldiers prepare for a final, hopeless battle, the doctor comes up with an alternative plan that may save them, but comes at a heavy price.

May 13 “The Blond Boy from the Casbah”
7 pm Capitol Theatre at Fort Edmonton Park
128 minutes. France: 2023

A passionate filmmaker returns to his birthplace, Algiers, with his young son to showcase his new film, which recounts his childhood in mid-20th century Algeria during the civil war. As he explores the city, he takes us through the joyful, tearful, and laughter-filled moments of his youth, spent between school, friends, and his Jewish family. The film also highlights the mosaic of religions that coexisted in Algiers.

May 13 Special Event:
Tour of H.B. Kline Jewelry Story
Before the film from 6 – 7 pm

Join the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (JAHSENA) team for an exclusive tour of the historic H. B. Kline Jewelry store, Edmonton's first Jewish-owned jewelry stores, located next to the Capitol Theatre. Originally open in this location from 1919 to 1928, the store was meticulously reconstructed and reopened in 2013 through a partnership between JAHSENA, the City of Edmonton, and Fort Edmonton Park.

May 15 “Bad Shabbos”
7 p.m. Capitol Theatre at Fort Edmonton Park
2024, 84 minutes. English: USA.

An engaged interfaith couple are about to have their parents meet for the first time over a Shabbat dinner when an accidental manslaughter gets in the way. This film features a star studded cast including Kyra Sedgwick and Milana Vayntrub.

A short film "Friday Night Flop" will screen before

the feature film.

In it, Tracy-Ann Oberman plays a mother losing touch with her daughter in an age of digital distraction. But a strange turn of events sparks a new beginning.

May 7-9 “Pink Lady.” Online event
2024, 106 min. Israel
Hebrew with English Subtitles

A seemingly perfect life within an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Jerusalem unravels when Bati discovers her husband Lazer's secret affair and blackmail, forcing her to confront her own desires and fight to protect her family.

May 11-13 “Never Alone.” Online event
2024. 85 min. Finland

Never Alone depicts the compelling journey of

Jewish refugees striving for safety in Finland during World War II. As Nazi power expands, a Jewish leader faces immense risks to safeguard his community. This poignant film highlights the power of bravery, resilience, and the relentless pursuit of hope in the face of overwhelming challenges.

Virtual Short Films: Online from May 6-15
“Crossing the River: from Poland to Paradise”
2024, 30 min. Canada: English.

“Hope on the Water”
2024. 6 min. Israel: English.

“Paddling for Life”
18 min. Israel. Documentary
Hebrew with English subtitles.

Purchase festival passes and individual tickets at jewishedmonton.org.
Please note that online films are only available to Edmonton residents.



Bringing Jewish perspectives to life.

We invite you to discover, connect, and engage with us, in person and virtually us at the **29th annual Edmonton Jewish Film Festival**. Join the conversation, as we explore and reflect on stories, traditions, and history, from a wide and varied Jewish world.



Top: *Pink Lady* (feature); Bottom L-R: *Song of Ascent* (Opening Night feature), *Never Alone* (feature), *Bad Shabbos* (feature)

May 6 – 15, 2025

In-person films \$15 / Online films \$10
\$5 for youth/students under 21/ \$70 all access pass
Tickets and info at JewishEdmonton.org



Birthright participants say visiting Israel is a transformative experience

By Larry Luxner

(JTA) – Maddison Spiegel of Westchester County, New York, had tried for years to go on a Birthright trip to Israel but somehow it never happened.

The first time she was supposed to go the COVID-19 pandemic got in the way, freezing all trips. The next time Spiegel applied she learned belatedly she had missed a deadline. Then came the war sparked by Hamas’s attack on Oct. 7, 2023.

Finally – this past December – Spiegel unexpectedly was offered a spot on Birthright. She grabbed it, joining 25 other young people on the free 10-day trip to the Jewish state. While some Birthright trippers or their parents were a bit nervous given the news from Israel and Gaza at the time, their concerns were assuaged as soon as the trip began, they said.

“We had an armed guard with us who was also a medic, so that was a big stress reliever,” said Spiegel, 24. “We never had to go to a shelter, and the staff knew every stop of the way. Never once did I feel unsafe.”

And unlike on trips before the war, Birthright trips now include components related to Israel’s experience since Oct. 7, such as visits to so-called Hostage Square in Tel Aviv and volunteering opportunities elsewhere in the country, that make the trip all the more meaningful, organizers say.

“Parents are definitely still concerned, and we want to reassure them that we take safety and security very seriously,” said Noa Bauer, Birthright’s vice president of global marketing. “More than that, their children will not only have the Birthright Israel experience but also another layer of Jewish community identity, resilience and connection to Israel. This is a very important aspect of the trip, especially for college students facing antisemitism on campus. They won’t feel alone on Birthright and will have new Jewish friends when they go back home.”

Spiegel, who works as an HR coordinator at Westchester Medical Center, was one of 20,000 young

Jews who visited Israel on Birthright last year. In 2025, Birthright expects the number to rise to 30,000, Bauer said. In 2019, Birthright’s peak year, the organization saw about 49,000 participants.

Maddison Spiegel’s mother, Joyce Spiegel, said she was very glad her daughter chose to go despite the war.

“We really wanted her to go, and we shared in her disappointment every time she tried to get a trip and was unable to,” Joyce Spiegel said. “As soon as we saw the itinerary, we felt much better knowing they were taking all the necessary precautions and weren’t in any direct danger.”

Mila Brener, 20, went on Birthright last August. The daughter of an Israeli mother and an American father, Brener, who lives in Los Angeles, said she always has had deep feelings for Israel – thanks in part to her grandmother in Haifa, with whom she has always been close.

“After Oct. 7, all I could think about was my savta,” said Brener, then a student at the New York Film Academy, using the Hebrew word for grandmother. “The war started while I was in my first semester in college, and it really took a toll on me. On social media, I saw the growth of antisemitism, and when we were putting up posters of the hostages on campus, people would rip them down and scream that it was Zionist propaganda. I couldn’t believe my eyes that this was happening in this day and age.”

Encouraged by her parents, Shirly and Bruce Brener, Mila signed up for Birthright – and came back newly energized and passionate about Israel.

“There was not one boring moment on that trip,” Brener said. “The most impactful was the Nova music festival site, which they’ve turned into a memorial. Just being there was so heartbreaking.”

In 2024, Birthright drew participants aged 18-26 from a variety of countries, with most coming from the United States, Canada, France, Argentina, Brazil, Russia, Ukraine, Britain and Germany. Since Birth-right’s launch in December 1999, some 900,000 young Jews have joined its programs.

Political Action Briefing



Calgary Jewish Federation’s Community Relations Committee hosted a special Political Action Briefing with Emile Scheffel, Managing Director of the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee (@cjpac).

After the Oct. 7 attacks, Birthright made some adjustments to the core 10-day trip.

Each group of 40 or so Birthright participants has two staffers, an Israeli tour guide and a security guard/medic, as well as eight additional young Israelis, usually soldiers, who accompany the group for five days.

“Meeting Israeli peers is one of the most exciting aspects of the trip,” Bauer said. “What strikes me the most is seeing participants coming to Israel and saying, ‘I actually feel safer here than I do back home.’ They take out their Star of David and wear it proudly – and they come back with new friends and a stronger sense of resilience.”

That was the case for Mackenzie Cooper, 20, of Smithtown, New York.

Mackenzie’s father, Craig Cooper, said it’s natural for parents to worry about their daughters.

“When she went on Birthright two summers ago, I had my own level of concern,” he said.

Mackenzie is a pre-law student at SUNY Binghamton. She recently returned to Israel for two months as part of the Birthright Onward program, where she interned for the municipality of Tel Aviv as a writer and proofreader in the city’s marketing department.


“Shaping Israel’s international perspective from the local level was an incredible experience,” she said. “I was on a beach in Tel Aviv when they announced the rescue of four hostages in Gaza. I didn’t even understand Hebrew, but everyone was jumping and screaming with joy. I felt completely safe, surrounded by love.”

Bauer added, “Today, Birthright offers an array of opportunities in Israel. From the well-known free 10-day trip to volunteering, internships, fellowships and prestigious summer programs, we have something for everyone.”

This story was sponsored by and produced in partnership with Birthright Israel, which aims to give every young Jewish adult around the world the opportunity to visit Israel on an educational trip. This article was produced by JTA’s native content team.


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EJFF *Cont. from page 1*

close, as the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (JAHSENA) is leading tours through H.B. Kline’s jewellery store adjacent to the Capitol Theatre. Tours begin at 6 p.m.

The culmination of the festival is a night filled with Shabbat laughs, despite it taking place on a Thursday (May 15). The evening starts with the short comedy, *Friday Night Flop*, and continues with the hysterical feature film, *Bad Shabbos*, which has been winning over audiences worldwide at film festivals. This hilarious farce, starring well-known actors Kyra Sedgwick and David Paymer, is reminiscent of the cult classic, *A Weekend at Bernie’s*, with a decidedly Jewish twist. It will have you in stitches – a perfect way to end the festival.

Since its inception, the EJFF has supported our commitment to the coast-to-coast partnership together program (p2g). Jointly, along with 5 other communities in Canada, we build and strengthen relationships with communities in the Northern Galilee Panhandle through programs that build Jewish Identity and promote the welfare and wellbeing of all partners involved. We will continue the tradition of supporting this program this coming year.

We hope you will join us at this year’s festival which runs between May 6 and 15. Tickets for in-person films are \$15 and \$10 for online films. For \$70, you can buy an all-access pass. Due to distributor requirements, the online films will only be available to Edmonton residents. For film descriptions, tickets, or to sponsor, please visit jewishedmonton.org. If you have questions, please email [Chloe Soibelman](mailto:Chloe.Soibelman@edjfed.org) at chloes@edjfed.org.

Chloe Soibelman is the Film Festival Coordinator for the Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

Ovics Scholarship allows TT teachers to attend Jewish Educators Conference

By Ari Sniderman

Thanks to a scholarship from the Rachel and Yossi Ovics Fund and a grant from the (Edmonton) Talmud Torah Society, I had the chance to attend the annual conference of the Jewish Educators Assembly last month in Chicago together with my teaching colleague, Shira Spring. The conference was titled *Israel Education: Past, Present, and Future*.

Over three days, teachers, principals, and rabbis met with leaders in the fields of Jewish and Israel Education to understand the ways in which Jewish institutions can help students form meaningful relationships with Israel.

In his D'var Torah to open the conference, Rabbi Adir Glick of Temple Har Zion in suburban Chicago noted that, since the October 7th attacks, Jews worldwide have been in mourning, together with their Israeli brothers & sisters. He reminded us that at the end of shiva, the family gets up and goes for a walk. As such, even while they are still in mourning, they move forward.

In educating our students about Israel, we do not ignore uncomfortable or unsettling facts or issues, but we do move forward.

In a subsequent session, Rabbi Eric Leiderman of IsraelLINK talked about the six pillars of Israel education, beginning with Zionism. He reflected on the fact that too many Jewish teens are unable to confidently answer the question: "What is Zionism?"

In an effort to engage on this issue, Unpack'd, an online Jewish education centre, presented a tour of their videos, podcasts, and articles suitable for students of all ages.

Another pillar of Israel education, Rabbi Leiderman pointed out, is diversity. As a democracy, we treasure diversity. As a Jewish people, we model diversity. As educators, one of our responsibilities is to ensure inclusivity in Israel education. Present-ers from Keshet: For LGBTQ Equality in Jewish Life, talked about connect-ing diverse populations to Israel.

Other sessions included a blindfolded minyan service; a session focused on understanding and combating anti-Semitism presented by an education expert with the Anti-Defamation League; and a session that dealt with preparation for Pesach studies that focused on the many instances and reasons why events involving the number 4 occur during the Seder.

Because Israel studies do not exist in a vacuum, throughout the conference Torah and prayer reinforced our experience, as they do in our daily Jewish lives. A strong Israel Education relies not only on history and hummus. It is bound by strong ties to



Talmud Torah teachers Ari Sniderman and Shira Spring at the Jewish Educators Assembly in Chicago.

Torah, prayer, the cycle of Jewish holidays, and ritual.

From my attendance at the Jewish Educators' Assembly conference I gained many insights for my classroom, for our community, and for myself. The discussions and sessions invoked deep reflection on my part about my practice as a Jewish educator and my role as a Jewish community member.

I know that our balanced Judaic Studies curriculum at Talmud Torah - teaching prayer, history, Tanach, holidays, and about Israel - aims to instill in students a deep and meaningful relationship with Judaism and Israel. I also know that Rachel and Yossi Ovics z"l would have loved to have joined us in Chicago. And I know that my experience will give extra meaning to my celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut this year.

Liberal Candidate aims to bring fresh perspective to Calgary Signal Hill

As a proud Canadian and champion of Calgary, Bryndis Whitson wants to represent your interests as Calgary's newest Liberal MP. Politically engaged since the age of eighteen, with a background in public service, community engagement, and supply chain and logistics, she is hoping to connect with voters on issues ranging from ensuring families can afford the essentials to equipping local businesses to thrive at home and on the global stage.

"As a long-time resident of Strathcona, I have seen firsthand the challenges and opportunities our community faces, and I am committed to making Calgary Signal Hill a place where everyone can succeed," says Bryndis. As an active community volunteer and multi-disciplined professional, Bryndis has spent years working in the fields of Public Policy & Government Relations, Transportation & Infrastructure, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Youth Engagement. This experience has shaped her commitment to public service: "I've seen firsthand how bureaucracy and policy decisions impact people's daily

lives, and I want to ensure Canada is a people-first country, not a paperwork-first country," Bryndis says.

Among Bryndis's top priorities for Canada are: ensuring Canada thrives on trade and collaboration not only internationally but interprovincially as well, driving economic prosperity and opportunity for all. She also envisions a Canada where everyone can afford the basic essentials and believes this can be achieved by supporting supply chain improvements and fair competition to reduce the cost of food, and implementing policies that tackle the rising costs of housing. Bryndis also wants to ensure Canada is resilient in the face of world threats and natural disasters, and knows that service, volunteering and advocating for our country are the foundations of a strong nation – she will continue to serve in any role she is fortunate enough to hold and wants to ensure there are opportunities for others to serve as well.


Since 2023, Bryndis has been canvassing the

neighbourhood, hosting community gatherings, including senior's teas and policy chats, and attending local events – listening to residents in the riding, aiming to learn what matters most to them. "It's not about telling people what is best for them, it's about listening to their concerns, standing up for their values, and fighting for a stronger future for everyone," she says.

"Emphasising respectful discourse and collaboration across party lines is key to finding practical solutions nationally as well as those tailored to Calgary's unique needs," says Bryndis. Calgary Signal Hill has historically leaned conservative, but Bryndis hopes to shift the conversation. She joins a race that also includes David McKenzie (Conservative), Khalis Ahmed (NDP), Natalie Austin (Green), Grant Stem (PPC) and Paul Godard (CFP).

"This riding needs someone who will fight for it," Bryndis explains, "and I am ready to bring the drive and commitment needed to be the voice for Calgary Signal Hill in Ottawa."

To learn more about Bryndis Whitson's campaign, visit Bryndis.ca.



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Celebrating Passover and Shabbat at Edmonton Talmud Torah



On April 11, Talmud Torah celebrated a school-wide Shabbat. The air was filled with the heartfelt voices of students singing prayers together, creating a sense of unity and peace. There was something so special about seeing everyone come together. Moments like these remind us of the power of community, tradition, and shared joy. Below: Students had the opportunity to prepare (and then eat) Pizza Matzah!

Vote *Cont. from page 10*

For too long, the loudest voices have either downplayed domestic antisemitism and Jewish ties to Israel, or used fear to shut down debate altogether. Neither serves democracy. Neither reflects the rich diversity of the Canadian Jewish community.

That’s why, ahead of this election, our policy centre released a new brief: **Canada’s Role in Israel-Palestine: Our Perspective and Priorities**. And it’s why we’ve **launched an email** campaign urging candidates across Canada to engage with a broader

range of Jewish voices - those committed to peace, justice, and democracy.

We are, at our core, a pro-Israel, pro-peace, and pro-democracy organization. On this anniversary of the Charter, and as we make a **plan to vote** we are reminded: democracy is more than a vote. It is a living system built on freedom of expression, equal rights, and the courage to confront uncomfortable truths.

Antisemitism is not the result of the actions of Israel, the visibility of pro-Palestine protests in the diaspora, or efforts to make our country a more inclusive and welcoming place.

It thrives, along with all hate and divisiveness, where democratic norms break down. Where disinformation spreads,

dissent is silenced, and fear replaces dialogue. That’s why we must speak out when even our allies, like Israel, take steps that threaten those norms.

So, as you make your plan to vote, speak with candidates, and discuss politics with friends and family, we urge you to advocate for a thoughtful, principled approach. One grounded not just in nuance, but in the values the Charter represents—freedom, equality, accountability, and justice.

We’ve seen in Israel, the United States, and even here at home just how fragile democracy can be. Preserving it demands more than agreement or comfort - it demands participation, challenge, and principled leadership.

A strong democracy doesn’t silence disagreement. It creates space for it. That’s how we know it’s working.

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Kelly has only introduced a single bill in 10 years in Parliament.

Sean McQuillan Edmonton West

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Eyeing an escape

Cont. from page 14

raised the specter of authoritarianism.

“The Trump administration’s actions are not as popular as many seem to think they are. There will eventually be a reckoning. And to facilitate that outcome, I choose to use voice instead of exit,” Drezner wrote.

But Shore isn’t so sure things will work out. She said her academic interest in Russia and its aggression towards Ukraine, in particular, has convinced her the U.S. is not far off from Putin’s brand of strongman government.

“I’m a neurotic Jew. The lesson of 1933: You get out sooner rather than later,” she said. Both she and Resnick cited one Holocaust-era text in particular to justify how they felt while watching Trump target non-Jewish groups: German pastor Martin Niemöller’s famous “First they came for...” reflection.

Snyder, for his part, wrote in an open letter that Trump did not influence his decision to move his family, including Shore, to Toronto. “I was not and am not fleeing anything,” he wrote in the campus newspaper. But he added that he understood why others might, added, “History shows that the people who attack universities are not friends of the Jews. The present American government is seeking not to combat antisemitism but to foment it.”

Rabbi Yehoshua Ellis, a member of the clergy at the Montreal-area liberal Orthodox synagogue Shaar Hashomayim, also knows a thing or two about fleeing danger zones. A Kansas City native, Ellis spent more than a decade living in Warsaw, Poland with his family, where as a working rabbi he provided assistance to Jewish Ukrainian refugees fleeing tensions and, ultimately, war with Russia.

In 2023, with the region becoming more unsafe, Ellis wanted to move his family out of danger. An American citizen, he could have brought them back to the United States. Instead, he chose the Montreal job — despite his lack of connections or citizenship pathways, and the fact that by law his family would have to spend years learning French. He still didn’t hesitate.

“I have a great love for America, as does my family. But it felt like the temperature in America was just getting a bit too high,” Ellis said, also citing gun violence and lack of access to public transit as factors influencing his decision not to return.

They moved shortly before Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel, after which Montreal, like many other major metropolitan areas, saw an explosion of pro-Palestinian activism as Israel’s response became more and more destructive. Still, he hasn’t looked back.

“In general I feel very happy about our decision to move to Montreal,” he said, adding that he believed the city’s Jewish community held “less agnosticism about

Israel” than their American counterparts. “There’s a level of comfort in their skin that Jews have here that I haven’t experienced in most other places I’ve lived, certainly not in the Diaspora.”

Similarly, Resnick was willing to try Winnipeg, she said, because it had “a good Jewish community,” along with a range of synagogue options and programming specifically for young professionals (she’s 30 and single, making the prospect of a move easier).

In New York she had attended a traditional egalitarian synagogue; in Winnipeg she alternates between the Conservative and Modern Orthodox congregations, depending on her mood. She already feels comfortable in this new community. Still, it has been an adjustment in many ways — and not just because of the cold, or Canada’s escalating tariff war with the United States.

Instead, some of the adjustments have been political. At her New York synagogue, Resnick said, she was “probably one of the most right-y people on Israel,” while being progressive on everything else. She described feeling unmoored politically, like other Jewish Americans post-Oct. 7. But in Winnipeg, she’s one of the furthest to the left.

“It’s amazing how the window shifts,” she said. “And I know my politics haven’t changed.”

As in New York, many of the other locals are fueled by concerns about rising antisemitism at home: Canada, like the States, has seen a severe uptick in campus activism and other radical actions since October 7.

Winnipeg in particular has seen a recent rash of antisemitic graffiti and other activities, including a protest outside the Federation building to oppose two Israeli military officers speaking on a pro-Israel “Triggered” tour. (Other extreme protests are unfolding in Toronto and at McGill University in Montreal, which recently saw a three-day pro-Palestinian student occupation that disrupted classes and other campus business; the country has also seen shootings outside synagogues and Jewish day schools, as well as infighting over Israel at Canadian cultural organizations.)

There are many Canadian Jews who, like American

JFSC Passover packages



This year, JFSC prepared more than 100 Passover packages to support their clients, ensuring they could celebrate with dignity and connection.

Jews, are deeply unhappy with how their government has responded to antisemitism. “A lot of Jews have felt that the Canadian prime minister did not represent their interests, and did not do enough to shut down protests and did not defend Jews enough,” Segal said. “And there’s been a lot of places that have spoken out against Zionists, equated it with genocide and all the rest of it.”

Yet Resnick said she doesn’t always agree with her new neighbors about what Jews should be most worried about.

“I have had people react with, basically, this idea that antisemitism is the biggest problem facing Jews in America and Canada,” Resnick said. “And I just don’t know that I agree with that. Not that it’s not a problem — it’s definitely a problem. But I think it has taken more extensive conversation to communicate that there are other, troubling things beyond the antisemitism that are the reason I left.”

For her part, Shore — who was more sympathetic to the pro-Palestinian protesters — said that she and Snyder had first considered leaving the United States after Trump’s first election in 2016. They had offers then to move to Geneva, but stayed at the time, Shore said, because she felt that her students needed her, and that she could do some good as an academic who studies European political and intellectual upheaval.

Snyder, who is not Jewish, channeled his own anger into the writing of “On Tyranny,” a book that builds on the analysis of Nazi language and tactics by Jewish thinkers like Hannah Arendt and Victor Klemperer. The book became a bestseller and totem of liberal

Continued on page 20

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Eyeing an escape

Cont. from page 19

resistance to the first Trump era. Shore’s Yale class read Arendt’s “The Origins of Totalitarianism.”

One freshman, she recalled, raised their hand and said, “Oh my god, Professor Shore, she’s talking about us.”

Now, with what Shore called the new administration’s “real, physical terror and violence,” she was no longer sure her presence at Yale would help in the same way. Could she physically stand between one of her international students and “a bunch of guys in masks” trying to deport them? She isn’t sure.

Shore tried activism at first. She signed her name to a list of Jewish scholars protesting the Trump administration’s detention of pro-Palestinian activist and green card holder Mahmoud Khalil.

She said she doesn’t normally “engage explicitly as a Jew,” but this time it felt important. “I felt that if Jews allow this administration’s cynical, disingenuous claim to be protecting us from antisemitism to be used as a pretext for abusing the rights of other people, we have morally bankrupted ourselves. We can’t let that happen,” she said.

Stanley, who is also Jewish, did not respond to a JTA request for comment. But he recently told NPR and other outlets that he decided to leave after Columbia University appeared to acquiesce to Trump’s demands to restrict student protester behavior in order to protect \$400 million in federal grants the administration threatened to cancel over antisemitism concerns.

The school’s actions have thus far failed to turn the tide of lost funds; the amount of federal grants being held from Columbia now reportedly sits at \$700 million. Trump also has reportedly floated the idea of bringing the entire university under strict federal

oversight. Stanley, the author of “How Fascism Works” and “Erasing History,” considered Columbia’s move a severe blow to academic freedom and a gateway to further antisemitism.

“This is the most anti-semitic moment of my life as an American, because this is an antisemitic attack on antisemitism,” Stanley recently told Vanity Fair. “This regime is leaning into the stereotype that Jews control the institutions, and they’re exploiting that stereotype in order to attack the institutions. ... They’re making campuses more dangerous because now everyone thinks that we control everything.”

The other Jewish emigres who spoke to JTA for this article, similarly, were not reassured by Trump’s actions purportedly taken to protect them. Both Resnick and Shore said they didn’t believe his attacks on campuses and international students in the name of fighting antisemitism would make Jews safer. Ellis, for his part, said none of it mattered in the face of Trump’s aggressive tariff proposals, which have thrown the global economy into crisis.

“It’s all going to be swept away with economic destruction. When the economy goes bad, the Jews are pretty much the forefront of the blame. It feels to me like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic,” he said. “It doesn’t matter how strongly America supports Israel if America has no strength.”

Meeting with the Memory Keepers Assoc.



The Memory Keepers Association of Edmonton visited the new Jewish Federation of Edmonton office this month in an act of continued allyship, understanding and friendship. (Federation Photo)

For all of the stakes attached to her move, Resnick said she has felt immediately comfortable in Winnipeg — precisely because she is Jewish.

“I’ve been told, for example, by my boss, ‘Wow, you’re so brave to come here. You didn’t know anybody. You came with a blank slate,’” she said. “Because I knew I had the Jewish community here, it didn’t feel risky. I knew that if, God forbid, something happened, there would be a safety net, a security link that I could fall back on.”

She added, “One of the beautiful things about being Jewish is you can be anywhere in the world and you’re not alone, because we’re everywhere.”

B’nai Brith Cont. from page 8

We also rebounded very quickly and realized that we have to fight again. We went into that war being told we have two goals. We have to defeat Hamas and to bring the hostages home. And we are now eighteen months later and neither goal has been achieved.”

She said that for two years prior to October 7, Israel was roiled by domestic dissent resulting from the proposed judicial reforms, “The enemy sensed weakness and they attacked.”

Bercovici continued that eighteen months later judicial reform legislation is still an issue and the government has managed to push through the first tranche of the legislation despite being in the middle of a war.

The second issue tearing apart the country, she explained, was the IDF draft. The standing army has 165,000 members while the reserve army, “the real

army,” being about 460,000.

In the last year, she said many reservists had served over 200 days and, “the families are falling apart and a huge cohort, the ultra Orthodox, who until now had a blanket exemption from service. Their leadership is refusing to cooperate with the State in that regard.” She explained that people from the reserve army are starting to not show up to serve, “They’re fathers. Some are grandfathers. We have men in their 50s falling on the battlefield in combat when fifteen percent of the population is refusing to serve. It’s unconscionable.”

The hostage situation is the third issue tearing apart the country. Bercovici noted there are 59 in captivity and 22 are known to be alive, “Israel is founded on an ethos that we leave no one behind. There is a large group in the current government that says, ‘No, too high a price to pay to bring them home. We’re not going to deal with Hamas.’”

Bercovici closed her remarks asking the audience to ponder their vote for the April 28 federal election, “Within days of becoming prime minister, Mark Carney announced yet another gift of \$100 million to UNRWA. That makes Canada one of the top donors in the world to an organization that we know works very closely with Hamas and Hezbollah.”

The Ben Docktor Award of Excellence was presented by dinner co-chair, Joel Grotsky, along with Diane Docktor, the widow of the late philanthropist for whom the award is named. Grotsky explained the award was established in 1993 and is presented to an individual who, like Ben Docktor (1940-2022), “has a passion for promoting B’nai Brith Calgary, exemplifies generosity, leadership, who contributes to the success of the annual B’nai Brith Calgary dinner and the community



Dr. Robert Barsky receiving the Ben Docktor Award of Excellence pictured with, left to right: Joel Grotsky (dinner co-chair), wife Marcie, daughter Genna, son-in-law Joel Zimmerman, Howard Silver (dinner co-chair). Photo by: Ron Switzer.

at-large.” Dr. Robert Barsky, who served in the role of B’nai Brith Calgary president for nearly twenty years, and under whose leadership the organization was able to provide financial support to over eighty charities, was bestowed the honour and received a standing ovation in recognition of his years of service to the Calgary community.

The B’nai Brith Calgary Dinner is organized by a committee of volunteers with the support of one part-time paid professional and the event is the charity’s largest annual fundraiser. It has a tradition of not paying its honourees and instead provides them with the opportunity to direct a donation in their honour to a charity of their choice. Premier Danielle Smith chose to direct her gift to Beit Halochem Canada, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel, while Vivian Bercovici directed her gift to The Arthur J.E. Child Comprehensive Cancer Centre.

Irena Karshenbaum is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter who writes in Calgary. irenakarshenbaum.com

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Shwarma chicken kebabs: Perfectly spiced, quick to make and oh-so-juicy

By Chaya Rappoport

(JTA) — This recipe originally appeared on The Nosh.

If you think chicken kebabs sound boring, I don't blame you. Usually they are. And dry. But not this recipe.

This recipe pays homage to one of the earliest forms of cooking: roasting meat on a spit over a fire. Roasting smaller cuts, like kebabs, became popular in areas like the Middle East, where firewood was scarce, as they proved more practical to cook over small fires. According to food historian Gil Marks, the word is derived from the ancient Persian "kabab," which most likely stemmed from Aramaic.

Today, their popularity holds fierce. Shish taouk, kebabs of marinated, spiced chicken, are enjoyed in Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Jordan. In Iran, kebab koobideh, kebabs of ground meat mixed with parsley and chopped onions, are served alongside rice and yogurt. In Israel, kebabs of spiced ground meat are ubiquitous at holiday barbecues.

Shwarma, while not exactly a kebab, is probably the most internationally beloved example of spit-roasted meat. Its flavorings — cumin, turmeric and coriander — inspired these kebabs. Bright with lime and onion, and made with juicy chicken thighs instead of breasts,

they take mere minutes to cook on a hot grill (you could do this on a grill pan, too). Plus they're so versatile: delicious with rice, perfect with warm laffa bread and hummus, and refreshingly offset by tzatziki, tahini or even bright arils of pomegranate.

I never do, but if you have leftovers, unskewer them and toss with greens, olives, hummus, tomatoes, red onion and good olive oil for a perfect lunch.

Ingredients:

For the kebabs:

4 or 5 4-ounce skinless, boneless chicken thighs, trimmed of excess fat and cut into 1/2-inch cubes, 1/4 cup olive oil, 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin, 1 teaspoon ground black pepper, 1 teaspoon ground turmeric, 1 teaspoon sea salt, 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika, 3/4 teaspoon garlic powder, 3/4 teaspoon ground coriander.

To serve:

parsley, lime wedges, thinly sliced red onion, hummus, laffa bread.

Directions:

1. Combine the spices in a bowl. Add the cubed chicken and olive oil; mix well to combine. Cover and refrigerate for a minimum of 30 minutes, and up to 12 hours. The longer it marinates, the tastier it'll be!

2. Take 12-15 wooden or metal skewers. If you're



using wooden skewers, soak them for half an hour so they don't burn and catch fire on the grill. Thread the marinated chicken onto the skewers — I like to thread them longways so there's more surface area to grill.

3. Preheat the grill to medium-high heat and grease it by dipping a few paper towels in vegetable oil then, using tongs, rub them carefully over the grates until glossy.

4. Place the kebabs on the grill and cook until golden brown, around 5-6 minutes per side. Use tongs to turn them. They should be charred in places.

5. Transfer to a platter and scatter with parsley and sliced red onion. Squeeze with fresh lime. Serve with warm laffa bread and hummus.

Lemon and herb roast potatoes with Harissa Mayo

By Shannon Sarna

(The Nosh via JTA) — I love roasted potatoes for Friday night, but sometimes they can get a bit boring. Of course you can dress up your potatoes with zaatar, mustard or even truffle oil, just to name a few of the hundreds of ways you can make roasted potatoes.

But I have been perusing a lot of Middle Eastern cookbooks lately and I got it into my head to make a harissa dipping sauce to go with potatoes. What is harissa? It's a spicy chili paste native to North African cuisine and varies from country to country but typically includes dried chilis, garlic, olive oil and spices like coriander, cumin, caraway and mint.

If you've never made harissa, don't be scared. It is much easier than you might imagine. I really liked this how-to guide from *The Kitchn* that explains how to use various ingredients to make the spicy paste. When I went to make this recipe for Shabbat last week, I opened my cabinet and was like "Oh darnit! I don't have any of the right kinds of peppers." But I ended up using two kinds of dried peppers that I did have, a regular old red bell pepper I roasted under my broiler, garlic cloves, fresh mint, olive oil and tomato paste. There are countless ways to make harissa, so you can use what you have on hand, research your favorite combination or (gasp) just buy some at the supermarket.

At the last minute I decided to marinate my potato wedges in lemon, herbs, garlic and olive oil for a complimentary flavor to the spicy harissa. I was not disappointed. If you have the time, I recommend marinating your potatoes 1-2 hours ahead of time to intensify the flavors.

These were anything but boring Friday night potatoes and there wasn't a single leftover potato during cleanup. You can go back to simple roast potatoes next week. Why not try something a little different this week?

Ingredients:

For the potatoes:

4 medium russet potatoes, cut into 1/4- to 1/2-inch thick wedges
juice and zest from 2 large lemons (or 3 small ones)
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
3 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 to 1/2 cup olive oil
salt and pepper

For the harissa mayo:

1 cup mayo
3 tablespoons harissa
1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
Combine lemon juice and zest, parsley, minced

garlic, olive oil, and salt and pepper in a large bowl. Toss potatoes with mixture and allow to sit up to 2 hours.

While potatoes marinate, combine mayo and harissa. Add more or less depending on your taste for spice.

Grease 2 large baking sheets. Spread potatoes in an even layer. Roast for 20 minutes.

Flip potatoes. Roast for another 20-25 minutes or until crisp and golden. Serve warm with harissa mayo for dipping.

Shannon Sarna is editor of The Nosh.

The Nosh food blog offers a dazzling array of new and classic Jewish recipes and food news, from Europe to Yemen, from challah to shakshuka and beyond. Check it out at www.TheNosh.com.

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A conversation with Edmonton Oiler Jake Walman

By Matthew Levine

With the NHL playoffs up and running, and star defenceman Mattias Ekholm’s return timeline uncertain, the Edmonton Oilers need their newest member to step up and perform. Jake Walman, the early March addition to the team, was acquired from the San Jose Sharks and has been exactly what the team has needed down the stretch. Walman provided some much-needed support to the defensive group and in rarity has also given Zach Hyman a fellow Yid to play alongside (and just in time for Passover too!).

Like Hyman, Walman grew up in Toronto. He was Bar-Mitzvahed, has been to Israel, and still celebrates the High Holidays. Just like his father, he attended the Jewish sleep-away camp Winnebago in Ontario. He grew up celebrating both Jewish and Christian holidays, but admitted that his favorite holiday is Chanukah, and he was insistent about pride in his Jewish identity.

“I’m really proud to be Jewish. That’s the biggest thing, and I like being a minority,” said Walman. “Some things are tough, but yeah, it makes you more proud.”

With his favorite holiday being Chanukah, we all know that one vital question had to be asked:

Q: Is it true that when you celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah, you get double the presents?

A: Yeah, yeah, uh, that’s what me and my brother tried to get out of it for sure.

Was he successful? We may never know. But here are some more rapid fire Q & A’s to get to know the newest Oiler, and Edmonton’s newest member of the tribe, number 96, Jake Walman:

Q: You haven’t been to a playoff game since your early days with St. Louis. Are you excited to be back in the playoffs this year?

A: Yeah, it’ll be nice. I’m ready for it. The first time I was in was during Covid, so it wasn’t the same atmosphere as we’re obviously going to have in Edmonton.

Q: I’ve read some of your past articles and saw that you enjoy a little gaming. What’s your favorite game?

A: Yeah, I’m still playing “Fortnite” like every day. I’ve played since the game first came out. I’m an OG player.

Q: With there being a minyan’s worth of elite Jewish hockey players in the NHL, is there a Jewish group chat for you all to schmooze in during your free time?

A: No, maybe there should be but I don’t know. I think there might be a Russian group chat in the NHL. Maybe we can start that up or something.

Follow-up: Do you think there is one and you just haven’t been invited yet?

Rebuttal: I hope not!

Q: Has Zach invited you over for Passover? Are you expecting anything?

A: Not yet but yeah. I’m expecting and hoping, especially because I’m sure he has a nice house.

(Hopefully he got that invite and had a nice Seder. Jake being the younger of the two, some Ma Nishtana may have been on the table).

Q: Applesauce or sour cream on a latke?

A: Sour cream.

Q: Sandler or Samberg?

A: Sandler.

Q: You have recently played for the first Jewish head coach in 30 or so years on the Sharks. What was that like, and did you ever connect through your Judaism specifically?

A: No, not really. We didn’t really connect that much. I think I’m honestly connected more with being on this team. When I came in, the first thing I thought was there’s three of us. Me, Zach and one of our video guys. So, yeah, we got a three-person squad right now.

Q: Elliott Friedman always refers to you as the pride of Armor Heights. What’s your favorite hockey nickname that you’ve had over the years?



Edmonton Oiler defenceman Jake Walman with Alberta Jewish News reporter Matthew Levine.

A: I don’t know. I’ve had a few, I think it’s just Wally. That’s probably the first one I got when I was a kid.

Q: How many more Jews do you think we need on the Oilers before we can negotiate a name change to the Edmonton Maccabees?

A: Well, we can maybe have a line first. Maybe five Jewish guys and call it the Maccabee line.

Q: Smoked meat or corned beef?

A: Depends on the Deli.

Q: Best ice in the league

A: It all sucks.

All indications are Jake is a great guy and was a pleasure to interview. We at Alberta Jewish News wish him and the rest of the Oilers good luck in the playoffs. Hopefully Jake and Zach can help the Oilers reach the pinnacle of hockeydom, bring the Stanley Cup back to Edmonton, and maybe even enjoy some matzo ball soup out of it.

Matthew Levine is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Should a student conceal

Cont. from page 6

Census that allows students to self-identify their religion, ethnicity, and other demographic details. Universities state that the data is used to monitor biases and inform support programs. Gould advises students against filling it out.

“That’s just for census data. It’s not required, and I wouldn’t answer it anyway,” she said. “It doesn’t matter whether you’re Jewish, gay, or whatever—it’s nobody’s business, and it won’t increase or decrease your chances of getting into a program.”

Jay Solomon, chief advancement officer with Hillel Ontario, says it’s troubling that many Jewish students feel the need to avoid selecting the Jewish identity box.

“No student should ever be forced to hide their Jewish identity or downplay their connection to the Jewish community,” he said in an email statement. “Jewish students deserve the right to fully embrace their religious and cultural practices in an environment free from discrimination.”

Despite her concerns, Cohen ultimately chose to keep Jewish-related experiences on her resume, including her roles at Chabad’s Ledbury Jewish Centre

and Aleph Champ Hebrew School.

However, she later questioned that decision after others suggested she remove explicit references to Judaism. “Someone said that I should have taken ‘Jewish’ out and just written ‘Ledbury Centre.’ But I hadn’t even thought about that,” she said. The uncertainty left her stressed about an application process that she had previously assumed would be straightforward.

But she was recently accepted into two teacher’s college programs.

“I’ve gotten into two of the schools already, York being one of them... but I’d rather not go there with all the antisemitism. But like if I’m going have to go there, I’m going have to go there.”

Concerns beyond academia

Beyond university applications, Jewish students applying for jobs are also questioning whether to conceal their Jewish identity during the hiring process, according to Ometz, a Jewish employment and immigration agency based in Montreal.

Lori Rubinger, director of employment at Ometz, said both young and older clients – including many immigrants from Israel – are deeply concerned about antisemitism affecting their job prospects.

for non-Jewish employers.”

Rubinger added that some Israeli applicants choose to leave their Israeli experience but remove details about their military service.

An employment specialist at Ometz, who asked to remain anonymous, said concerns about antisemitism in hiring can serve as a litmus test.

“For those wondering whether to keep or remove their Jewish background and work history, Hebrew language skills, and education, I point out that if an employer doesn’t want to hire them because they are Jewish, that’s not right, of course. But I also tell them this is a way to screen out employers who are not interested in hiring Jewish applicants. After all, they likely wouldn’t be happy working for an antisemitic employer.”

Focus on leadership

Maya Zimmerman, student president of Hillel Montreal, says fear of antisemitism within hiring teams or admission committees is “something all Jewish students are thinking about.”

A second-year undergraduate student at McGill University, Zimmerman says she is not yet focused on grad school or job prospects, but knows she will need to consider her approach when the time comes.

“I’m not taking (Hillel president) off my CV. But maybe I’ll need to highlight the leadership role and focus less on (affiliations) with Jewish life,” she said.

While consulting applicants, Gould stresses the importance of standing out as a leader.

“They’re looking for the quality of your extracurriculars—where you had impact, where you created change,” she said. “That’s what matters most.”

Shnier echoes this sentiment. “My advice is, don’t hide,” she says. “Showcase the hell out of yourself. Demonstrate the significance of your experience, the impact, the growth, and how that ties into your bigger goals.”

Mitchell Consky is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

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“Many are set on removing or at least downplaying their Israeli experience on their CV,” she wrote in an email statement. “If they have no recent experience in Montreal and need to list their Israeli experience, they leave it, but they apply mainly to Jewish-run companies. Some that have both Israeli education and Canadian experience will create two CVs – one for Jewish employers and the other

from the

Sources

by Eliezer Segal

The Mother Tongue

In 1845, the eminent scholar Abraham Geiger published a pioneering grammar of the Hebrew of the Mishnah. His analysis supported his claim that the language in which that central rabbinic text was composed was not a spoken dialect, but rather an artificial contrivance based mostly on the biblical language, combined with a large dose of Aramaic. Its character was thus analogous to the role of Latin in medieval Christendom.

Geiger’s theory achieved influence among many scholars, but it was eventually disproven decisively. Not only were there internal features of Mishnaic Hebrew (as recorded in trustworthy manuscripts) that could not be ascribed to either the Bible or Aramaic, but documents that came to light subsequently – such as the Dead Sea scrolls and the Bar Kokhba letters – were composed in Hebrew dialects that resembled that of the rabbinic texts. There is now no doubt that Hebrew was a living vehicle of communication during the early years of the Common Era.

To be precise: During the second Jewish commonwealth, the residents of the southern part of Israel, Judea, communicated in both Hebrew and Aramaic, while the northern Galileans spoke only Aramaic. The destruction, killing, enslavement and expropriation perpetrated by the Romans in their suppression of Jewish uprisings led to a mass migration northward. As a result, by the early second century, Hebrew was losing its status as a dominant vernacular.

According to a story that is brought in several variations by the Talmuds, a group of students were puzzled by some unusual Hebrew words that appear in the Bible and rabbinic works. In order to ascertain their meanings, they came to the regal home of the patriarch Rabbi Judah. They were met there by a feisty maidservant who, in ordering them about, made use of those obscure words in her conversation.

One of the perplexing words was “*serugin*” meaning “out of sequence.” The students learned its meaning when the maidservant scolded them for entering the building in a disorganized jumble instead of in an orderly double-file.

Another obscure word was “*halaglog*,” referring to

the herb purslane. The maidservant revealed its meaning when one of the students dropped some (which they referred to using an Aramaic word), whereas she designated them by the archaic Hebrew term. She also knew to sweep up the mess with a broom, to which she referred by means of an arcane term from biblical Hebrew.

Some scholars understand that in choosing a maidservant as the linguistic authority in these anecdotes, the authors intended to show that Rabbi Judah’s court was so learned that even a menial domestic worker could be knowledgeable about the intricacies of the sacred tongue. However, most historians seem to read the evidence in a different way – as evidence that after transferring to Galilee where most students adopted the local Aramaic culture, only an aged family retainer held fast to the old Judean customs, and was thereby able to preserve the remnants of the traditional Hebrew vernacular.

It would appear that spoken Hebrew was still alive, albeit tenuously, in the tenth century, during the lifetime of Rav Saadiah Gaon who was instrumental in formulating a synthesis between Jewish tradition and the prevalent Arab Muslim civilization. In their determination to create a pure, authentic standard of literary Arabic, urbane scholars would journey from Baghdad to visit Bedouin tribes in the Arabian desert in the hope of hearing their sacred tongue in its rarified, unadulterated form as it issued from the lips of native speakers.

Evidently, Saadiah was attempting a similar project for Hebrew. He recognized Tiberias in the Galilee, where he had resided before moving to Babylonia, as the preeminent centre of Hebrew language in his generation, as a locality where Hebrew (mixed with Aramaic) was used not only by scholars, but also served as the vernacular for Jewish men, women and children in their everyday interactions at home and in the marketplace.

In connection with a certain technical grammatical question of how a vowel at the end of one word can affect the pronunciation of the first consonant in the next, Saadiah reported: “This is true not only in the Bible, but also in all speech and conversation, even

among women.” To illustrate this grammatical rule, he cited an anecdote about a woman who approached her child’s teacher and said to him: ‘O teacher, release my son!’ using the soft (fricative) form of the consonant, rather than the hard (plosive) form. On another occasion, she called her son “Gad Gad” using the hard form of his initial letter, and the boy did not respond until she called him “Ya Jad” using the soft form, because this time she had inserted the word “ya” before the name.

Although some eight centuries separate the stories about Rabbi Judah’s maidservant and the young student’s mother in Tiberias, they are in fundamental agreement about the fact that Jewish women were speaking proper Hebrew in their homeland.

In the modern era the role of women in the transmission of Hebrew became crucial again with the revival of the language under the aegis of the Zionist movement. Beginning with the establishment of the first Hebrew kindergarten in Palestine, in Rishon Lezion, institutions for early childhood education proliferated, often in the face of opposition from traditionalists and competition for scarce financial resources. Almost all the teachers were young women chosen for their competence in the Hebrew language.

But of course, a spoken language is not acquired only in the classroom. Ita Yellin, a prominent activist in the fields of childhood education and Hebrew language instruction at the beginning of the twentieth century, observed how “the Hebrew mother had no choice but to learn the language from her children who were educated in our language, and once they returned home from the kindergarten, they chattered with their parents and sang their songs in Hebrew.”

Those mothers and teachers were continuing a long and honoured tradition of perpetuating the language that is so vital to the Jewish national soul.

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

A lovely Golden Age Luncheon at the Paperny Family Calgary JCC



A wonderful Golden Age Luncheon was held at the Paperny Family Calgary JCC marking the end of the season. Everyone had a lovely time catching up with friends old and new, while noshing on a delicious meal from Karen’s Cafe and Catering. Rabbi Ilana (Calgary Beth Tzedec Congregation) and Reverend Laurie (St. Andrew’s Presbyterian - Calgary) attended and they shared information about Passover and Easter traditions, uncovering their beautiful connections and unique differences. Shout out to the wonderful staff for their volunteer service and care at each of the luncheons. (JCC Facebook photo).

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Jewish Federation of Edmonton welcomes Becky Saegert

The Jewish Federation of Edmonton recently announced that Becky Saegert (née Solomon) is joining their team as Senior Director of Strategic Development. She is leading fundraising efforts that include the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) annual campaign, the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation, emergency campaigns, and more.

In a press release, Federation CEO Stacey Leavitt-Wright says, “An accomplished communal professional, Becky joins us from the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, where she served as Vice President, Marketing and Communications for 16 years. She worked extensively on their growing annual campaign, helped drive support for planned giving and the redevelopment of their Jewish Community Centre (JCC) campus, led digital and traditional direct fundraising, and developed dozens of funding proposals that inspired major gifts.”

Becky was born and raised in Edmonton and returned to her hometown with her family in 2020 as she continued to work remotely for the Vancouver Federation. Since she’s been back, she has volunteered on our Federation’s strategic planning committee and on Talmud Torah’s security committee. Before she moved to BC, she was deeply involved in the Edmonton Jewish community through BBYO, working at the JCC, and even interning as a summer student for our Federation.

“As a teen, Becky received a scholarship from our Federation to offset part of the cost of participating in the March of the Living,” continues Leavitt-Wright. “That transformational experience ultimately set her on a career path that has culminated in her return to serve our Federation and our community. It speaks volumes about her commitment to our work.”

Welcome to Jewish Federation of Edmonton, Becky!



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