

## Words from the Director



Mina Cohn

It was a hot and busy summer. Holocaust Education Month (HEM) was fast approaching and CHES was excited to offer our community a full slate of programming that promised to be moving and enriching. We chose “Antisemitism” as the theme of the 2019 HEM, which featured renowned Holocaust historian Professor Deborah Lipstadt.

Sadly, 80 years after the outbreak of World War II, the world around us seems to be in constant upheaval. The rise of far-right extremist groups, “fake” news, and misleading information is of great concern to all of us. The increase in antisemitism and racism, largely online, is particularly worrisome.

### **Workshops Relevant and Timely**

These troubling developments and the understanding of the need to share information prompted me to approach the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) and offer a workshop on racism and antisemitism. The response was positive and so, along with the annual Teachers’ Workshop, CHES held an inaugural Law Enforcement Workshop to help the

OPS and its partners understand antisemitism through the ages. Specific case studies deepened their understanding of antisemitism and World War II and society as it is evolving today. It touched on developing an understanding of current issues of discrimination and helped to promote equality and diversity in our city (see “HEM Workshops Reach Teachers and Police” below).

Given the disturbing developments we witness around us, our work is ever more relevant and urgent. We know that building a society free from racism and discrimination requires an ongoing, deeply rooted commitment to education. CHES will continue to support area educators through our outreach to schools with more frequent local Teachers’ Workshops.

### **Partners Wanted**

CHES recognizes that visitors to the National Holocaust Monument need more details about the Holocaust to enrich their experience and their understanding of the legacy and lessons of the Holocaust. Therefore, CHES is looking for local and national partners to develop a smartphone-based app to provide appropriate information.

### **Building for the Future**

I recall 25 years ago when survivors, who made up the majority of members of the Shoah Committee, were seriously concerned with the question: “Who will continue our work when we are not be able to?” This year we are privileged and proud to present HEM events that highlight the work done by 2nd Gens. They reflect the talent and power that children of survivors can now bring to Holocaust Education.

It is important to note that for the first time three local descendants of Holocaust survivors, who are not members of the CHES committee, stepped up to help us organize a symposium featuring four expert panelists. Thank you to Esther Rosenberg, Benita Siemiatycki, and Marlene Wolinsky for joining our symposium subcommittee and for their wonderful ideas and their dedication (see “Family Reunion Inspires

Commitment” below.)

### **CHES Corner Launched in OJB**

Despite four years of CHES programming and outreach, the Ottawa Jewish community remains confused about who we are and what we do. To improve awareness of our work and improve our standing, we believe that a dedicated space in the Ottawa Jewish Bulletin (OJB) will be helpful. The idea was to create a column in the OJB for CHES’ voice to be heard; this proposal was declined by the OJB. CHES then decided to pay for space and thus was born the ½ page column, CHES’ Corner: News and Views from the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship, with three columns published to date.

### **Powerful Symposium for 2nd and 3rd Gens**

An audience of 80 listened intently as Artur Wilczynski, former Canadian Ambassador to Norway and a 2nd Gen survivor, moderated a distinguished panel of Holocaust experts on issues of great relevance to children and grandchildren of survivors. Break-out sessions allowed participants to discuss their personal experiences and to learn about strategies on dealing with the myriad of issues that can arise as a result of their family circumstances. There was much enthusiasm and a feeling of urgency for further action.

“Thank you for the great event; it was a really powerful, educational day,” said Lorne Geller, a 3rd Gen participant.

The strong message from the panelists stressed that the strength to confront antisemitism and hate emerges from a sound grounding in Jewish identity, a commitment that is lacking among many Jews. It is my hope that a grassroots organization will emerge as a result of the symposium, which CHES will gladly support.

### **Looking Ahead**

We were very pleased with the excellent turnout at our events during HEM. We hope to see more people engage with our events and topics and are looking forward with much excitement to 2020.

## Bottner Event Attracts Large Audience

Sheila Osterer

More than 80 people braved the rainy weather to listen to Dr. Bottner. Mina Cohn welcomed her and Ambassador Johan Verkammen. Mina spoke about the importance of 2nd and 3rd Gen survivors keeping the memories of the Holocaust alive.

Ambassador Verkammen stressed the importance of CHES' work. He described what Belgium has done to honour the victims of the Holocaust and explained that of 70,000 Belgian Jews, about 25,000 were deported during the war, and not more than 1200 survived. Most who did survive, he said, were hidden by Catholic priests and nuns. He explained that Belgium adopted the first laws that banned Holocaust denial, and that

the country established a Jewish alliance and museum in Brussels to honour the memory of Holocaust victims.

Dr. Bottner shared an experience she had after the birth of her son. She experienced terrifying, intrusive thoughts, imagining she was living under Nazi occupation and wondering how to evade the horrors. While she knew her parents were Holocaust survivors, she had avoided thinking about that. Years later, she began learning about epigenetics and believes that what happened to her grandparents and her father contributed to what she experienced when her son was born.

Dr. Bottner discussed the lives of her great grandparents before the war and shared the survival story of her grandmother and her father.

She explained that Andrée Guelen, a Brussels teacher who was horrified when Jewish children started wearing stars and then stopped coming to school, joined the Belgium resistance helping to transport children to the homes in which they were to be hidden. In the summer of 1942, she brought Tammy's father to a convent.

Her aunt Irene, born in 1943, was adopted by the parents of a priest in the resistance, and also survived the war. The family was reunited after the war, but it was excruciating as the daughter rejected her parents whereas her father was delighted to be reunited with them.

Dr. Bottner concluded by saying that "man never made any material as resilient as the human spirit."



Sharon Rosenberg (l) with Dr. Tammy Bottner (seated)

## 2019 Holocaust Education Month Features Outstanding Programs

### Award-Winning Book's Canadian Launch

Dr. Tammy Bottner, the child and grandchild of Holocaust survivors, is the author of *Among the Reeds: The True Story of How a Family Survived the Holocaust*, which is a best seller on Amazon. A bagel breakfast marked the Canadian launch of her book and she took part in conversation, discussion, and a book signing. Johan Verkamen, the Ambassador of Belgium to Canada, offered words of welcome.

Dr. Bottner was born in Ottawa and as a child lived for several years in Israel. However, most of her life has been spent in the United States although she earned her undergraduate degree from McGill University. She lives in Newburyport, Massachusetts, is married to Dr. Daniel

Carlat, and has two children, both now university students.

Her father was a hidden child in Belgium, spending half of the first five years of his life separated from his family. In her book, Dr. Bottner ponders the question of whether the trauma of this separation ended with the conclusion of World War II. She is fascinated by the science of epigenetics and the evidence for inter-generational transmission of trauma.

*Among the Reeds* is the author's debut book and earned her "best female author/nonfiction" and the Reader's Choice award 2018. She has given talks all over America, and in South Africa, and has pending engagements in Australia and New Zealand.

#### Postscript

Dear Mrs. Cohn,

It is for me to commend you for organizing this very meaningful and pleasant gathering with a very captivating speaker. It was really enriching to hear her family's story. Indeed, I would like to inform my colleagues in the United States (Embassy of Belgium in Washington and Consulate in New York) about her book and ability to make a such an interesting presentation. Perhaps there might be a mutual interest to set up an event, given the Belgian connection. It was very nice to meet you and to get acquainted with CHES.

Thanks again!

Best regards,

Johan Verkamen

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium

Several weeks ago, Noa Ogilvy contacted the ZC and expressed her interest in being a volunteer for the ZC. Noa is doing her Master of Arts in International Affairs, specialization in Security and Defense Policy, at Carleton's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs. Her BA is from Concordia where she did a double minor in Chinese Language and Culture and Israel Studies. While at Concordia, she became an active volunteer for the Azrieli

Institute of Israel Studies at Concordia, assisting with their events on campus. As part of a three-day conference dedicated to the interdisciplinary exploration of Israel 70 years after the creation of the State, Noa prepared and curated a multi-media collage on the theme of "Israel at 70 Years" <https://www.concordia.ca/artsci/research/azrieli-institute/events/israel-at-70/art-installation.html> As part of her program in Israel Studies, she participated in the Azrieli

Institute's Summer in Jerusalem in July 2017, and in it's Summer in Israel in July and August of 2018. The ZC is delighted with Noa's offer to be a ZC volunteer.

The article below is her perspective on Yuri Dojc's 'Last Folio.' For more information on this excellent event see p.21 below.

## Yuri Dojc's 'Last Folio': Cultural Memories of Jewish Life in Slovakia



Noa Ogilvy

On Sunday, November 3rd, acclaimed Slovakian-Canadian art photographer Yuri Dojc came to the Kehillat Beth Israel Synagogue and gave a presentation of his project Last Folio,

showing images and a short documentary that detailed the making of the work. Last Folio is a series of photographs which aim to capture, preserve, and memorialize the remaining pieces and fragments of what Dojc calls “cultural memories of Jewish life in Slovakia”. The images are divided into five categories: books, buildings, cemeteries, fragments, and survivors.

The project began as a straightforward documentation of Slovakian Holocaust survivors, but slowly transformed into an exploration of Jewish cultural objects and spaces; namely, books and synagogues. In his presentation, Dojc described his 2006 discovery of what he called a “little heder”, a small room inside what had been a Jewish school in Eastern Slovakia. This little ‘heder’ was filled with Jewish books and Torah scrolls, all petrified in time. Simply flipping the pages of the books or unraveling the scrolls would have shattered many of them, and they would have turned to dust if not for the ink holding the parchment together. Dojc and his team began to document as many of these Jewish ‘fragments’ as they could, and he spoke of how the books themselves soon took on identities of their own; a few lines of simple handwriting scrawled in a book’s front cover were able to build identities for so many people for whom history has left us no names. Dojc described

the books “as tombstones”. By photographing and then later burying the books, Dojc and his team were able to give the books and the people who had owned them a beautifully heart-wrenching memorial service through art.

As an artist myself, I was especially moved by the still life images of cultural objects and spaces in Last Folio. Dojc’s documentation of books, synagogues, and cemeteries, spoke to Slovakian Jewish history and, by extension, Eastern European Jewish history, in a way that is uniquely their own. By showing us these photographs of objects and places that have by now returned to dust, have crumbled away, or have been buried beneath the earth, Dojc is able to paint a portrait of Slovakia’s Jewry by manner of omission; it is precisely in our search for people and faces in these photographs of Slovakian Jewish life that we are made acutely aware of what has been lost.



(fig. 1) Yuri Dojc, “Book Fragments, ‘Hanishar’”, Bardejov, 2006

One image that strikingly captures the spirit of Last Folio is the image titled “Book Fragments, ‘Hanishar’, Bardejov, 2006” (fig. 1).

The image shows decaying and torn book pages, with Hebrew letters appearing in bits and pieces. Near the bottom centre of the image, one word reads complete, hanishar, meaning ‘what remains’. Perhaps there is no

better image to sum up the message of Dojc’s work and the mission it serves: to preserve and protect what remains, to acknowledge and pay homage to what has been lost.

Although there is no question that Dojc’s images are quite sobering, they also offer viewers an incredibly poignant message of the power of art in the face of the overwhelming tragedy of the Holocaust. At first glance, the images of Slovakia’s crumbling synagogues, aging Holocaust survivors, and decaying Jewish books and cultural objects are extremely difficult to look at. It is hard to fully comprehend the extent of what was lost, a loss that is made even more difficult in the context of knowing that three fourths of Slovakian Jewry were killed during the War. Last Folio, through its photo preservation of many crumbling and endangered Slovakian synagogues, has been able to raise awareness and lead the Slovakian government and private donors to save some of the buildings. Unfortunately, for the books and cultural fragments, Last Folio can only offer them a final resting place, a memorial of what was. Dojc named the project Last Folio because he knew that for many of the objects, places, and people he photographed, his work would act as the final closing chapter for them, and, by extension, for Jewish life in Slovakia.

Yuri Dojc’s work, not only as an artist, but also as an activist dedicated to Holocaust remembrance, is needed today more than ever, given the many different political and nationalist groups attempting to re-write and bury the true history of the Holocaust. Last Folio, using the power of image and the power of art as activism, is able to visually remind us of the importance of understanding history and the consequences of antisemitism. Each image speaks softly to viewers, quietly urging them to never forget.

## Yuri Dojc: An Outstanding HEM Event

Mina welcomed the audience and introduced Vit Koziak, the Slovakian Ambassador to Canada, who expressed appreciation to all who made the event possible. He explained that the story Yuri Dojc tells is overwhelming and said that Yuri is not only a photographer but is also a part of the story.

Speaking calmly, Yuri Dojc explained the serendipitous manner by which he came upon the survivors, the abandoned and decaying synagogues, and the school whose

books and religious items had remained intact, all of which he photographed for the Last Folio. Each photograph was haunting but one of the most moving was of a piece of a religious book that had belonged to his grandfather.

Most of the questions from the audience came from survivors and 2nd and 3rd Gen survivors involving Jews from Czechoslovakia. The appreciative audience learned that the books have since been buried in the Jewish tradition and

that many of the synagogues Yuri photographed in various stages of decay have since been beautifully renovated and are used as cultural centres by the Slovak people. He said the focus of his project was not the Jewish community of Slovakia today, but the survivors who were alive at the time of his numerous visits to Slovakia. For more info visit: [carleton.ca/ches/wp-content/uploads/2019Yuri-Dojc-article-OJB-191007\\_pg-18-002-PDF.pdf](https://carleton.ca/ches/wp-content/uploads/2019Yuri-Dojc-article-OJB-191007_pg-18-002-PDF.pdf)



From left to right: Richard Zuker, Yuri Dojc, Mina Cohn and Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, Vit Koziak.

## Inspirational Journey Captured for Posterity

Yuri Dojc, renowned art photographer, artist, and witness presented his project, Last Folio, Memories of Jewish Life in Slovakia. The program included the screening of a documentary by Katya Krausova and a talk by the artist, illustrat-

ed with slides, about his personal journey through Eastern Slovakia where he discovered an abandoned Jewish schoolhouse, untouched since 1942 when Jews from the area were deported to the camps. His journey was the inspiration for this multi-

disciplinary project of photographs, interviews with survivors, a book, and a video – all of which have been widely exhibited to great acclaim (<https://www.amazon.ca/Last-Folio-Textures-Jewish-Slovakia/dp/0253223776>)..

## Acclaimed Holocaust Expert Comes to Ottawa

Sheila Hurtig Robertson, CHES  
Committee Member

**Professor Deborah E. Lipstadt**, Doro Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies, Emory University, was the keynote speaker at the HEM launch event. Her topic was *Antisemitism: Old Wine in New Bottles*. A world-renowned Holocaust historian and author, Professor Lipstadt is perhaps best known for *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier* which was turned into the feature film *Denial* in 2016 and tells the story of how she won the libel suit brought against her by Holocaust denier David Irving. Professor Lipstadt has been a consultant to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and served two terms on the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Her most recent book is *Antisemitism Here and Now*, “a penetrating and provocative analysis of the hate that will not die.

“CHES was honoured to welcome

Professor Lipstadt as the keynote speaker at the launch,” said Mina Cohn. “Given the current global upheaval, it was important to bring to Ottawa one of the world’s foremost Holocaust scholars and to learn from her how to confront and fight antisemitism.”

(<http://religion.emory.edu/home/people/faculty/lipstadt-deborah.html>)

For an excellent account of the launch event visit <https://newsroom.carleton.ca/story/deborah-lipstadt-tackles-holocaust-deniers/>

### **Arie van Mansum Award Presented to Professor Jan Grabowski**

As part of the launch event, CHES acknowledged Professor Jan Grabowski for demonstrating consistent excellence in Holocaust Education with the Arie van Mansum Award, initiated as a tribute to Mr. van Mansum, a Righteous Gentile from the Netherlands who lived in Ottawa.

During World War II, Mr. van Mansum came to the aid of many Jews in the

Netherlands, providing them with hiding places and creating counterfeit food stamps and false identity cards. Because of his involvement with the Dutch underground, he was arrested by the Gestapo in 1943, brutally interrogated, and then imprisoned in a concentration camp for two years until liberated by the Canadian Armed Forces. He assisted the local police with their investigations into war criminals and in 1946 appeared as a witness at a war crimes trial. In 1958, he and his wife emigrated to Ottawa where he lived quietly until his death in 2014.

Dr. Jan Grabowski, a deserving and exceptional professor of history at the University of Ottawa, has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to teaching the history and legacy of the Holocaust and ensuring that those terrible events are never forgotten. He continues to courageously withstand attempts to whitewash the history of the Holocaust in Poland, teaching all of us to speak up and protect history.

He is a founding member of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research in the Polish Academy of Sciences. He has been an invited professor at universities in France, Israel, Poland, and the United States. In 2011, he was appointed the Baron Friedrich Carl von Oppenheim Chair for the Study of Racism, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust at Yad Vashem. In 2016-17, he was the Ina Levine Senior Invitational Scholar in the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. In 2020, he will be the Distinguished Fellow at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich, Germany. Dr. Grabowski has written and edited 16 books and published more than 70 articles in English, French, Polish, German, and Hebrew. His book, *Hunt for the Jews. Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* was awarded the Yad Vashem International Book Prize for 2014.



Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, on her right, Dr. Benoit-Antoine Bacon, President and Vice-Chancellor, Carleton University, and on her left, Irwin Cotler, Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights and former Minister of Justice, and on his left, Professor Jan Grabowski.



Amazing turn-out to hear Professor Lipstadt

His most recent work, *Night Without End: Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland*, was published in April 2018, in Warsaw in Polish. His forthcoming book, *The Role of the Polish “Blue” Police in the Extermination of Polish Jewry*, is scheduled for publication shortly.

A meticulous scholar, Professor Grabowski has written and spoken forcefully about the violence perpetrated by Poles against their Jewish neighbours during the Holocaust. A 2016 paper criticized what he called “the history policy of the Polish state”, arguing that “the state-sponsored version of history seeks to undo the findings of the last few decades and to forcibly introduce a sanitized, feel-good narrative.” He has deplored plans for a monument to rescuers of Jews, to be located in a square that was part of the Warsaw Ghetto which he sees as an attempt to inflate the role of the rescuers whom he describes as a “desperate, hunted, tiny minority”, the exception to the rule. The ghetto site should be dedicated, he argues, to Jewish suffering, not to Polish courage.

Professor Grabowski continues to be resolute in his condemnation of the policy

of the Polish Government and Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance and their efforts to silence him by criticizing his academic credibility and his personal integrity and accusing him of defaming Poland.

In contrast, some 180 Holocaust historians and other historians of modern European history signed an open letter in his defence, addressed to the Chancellor of the University of Ottawa, stating that “[h]is scholarship holds to the highest standards of academic research and publication.”

Carly Jevcak took a course on the Holocaust with Professor Grabowski in 2017 during her undergraduate degree at the University of Ottawa. Her comments capture the strengths of his teaching and the reasons CHES chose him to receive the award. She wrote:

“Dr. Grabowski’s style of teaching is what every history teacher should strive to achieve. He punctuates his lectures with primary sources and often translates them on the spot - no matter which language the document may be in. They could be Einsatzgruppen records or Nazi propagan-

da posters. He encouraged us to evaluate primary sources for ourselves as well. He is a truly insightful educator who focuses on the evidence - even if the results are controversial.



“Professor Grabowski has inspired me as an educator because I’ve seen firsthand how engaged students can be when they are able to interact with actual pieces of history instead of being given chronological overviews. Using primary sources to illustrate the journey Holocaust victims took is more impactful than a statistic. It’s also why survivor testimonies resonate with so many individuals. Reflecting on one of these testimonies was our final project in his class.

“I cannot think of a better individual to educate the future generations about the Holocaust. I will never forget his class.”

## Dr. Deborah Lipstadt Visits Ottawa's National Holocaust Monument

Renowned Holocaust historian Dr. Deborah Lipstadt visited Ottawa's Holocaust monument for the first time, prior to delivering the keynote event at the CHES launch of the 2019 Holocaust Education Month - and she said it impressed her.

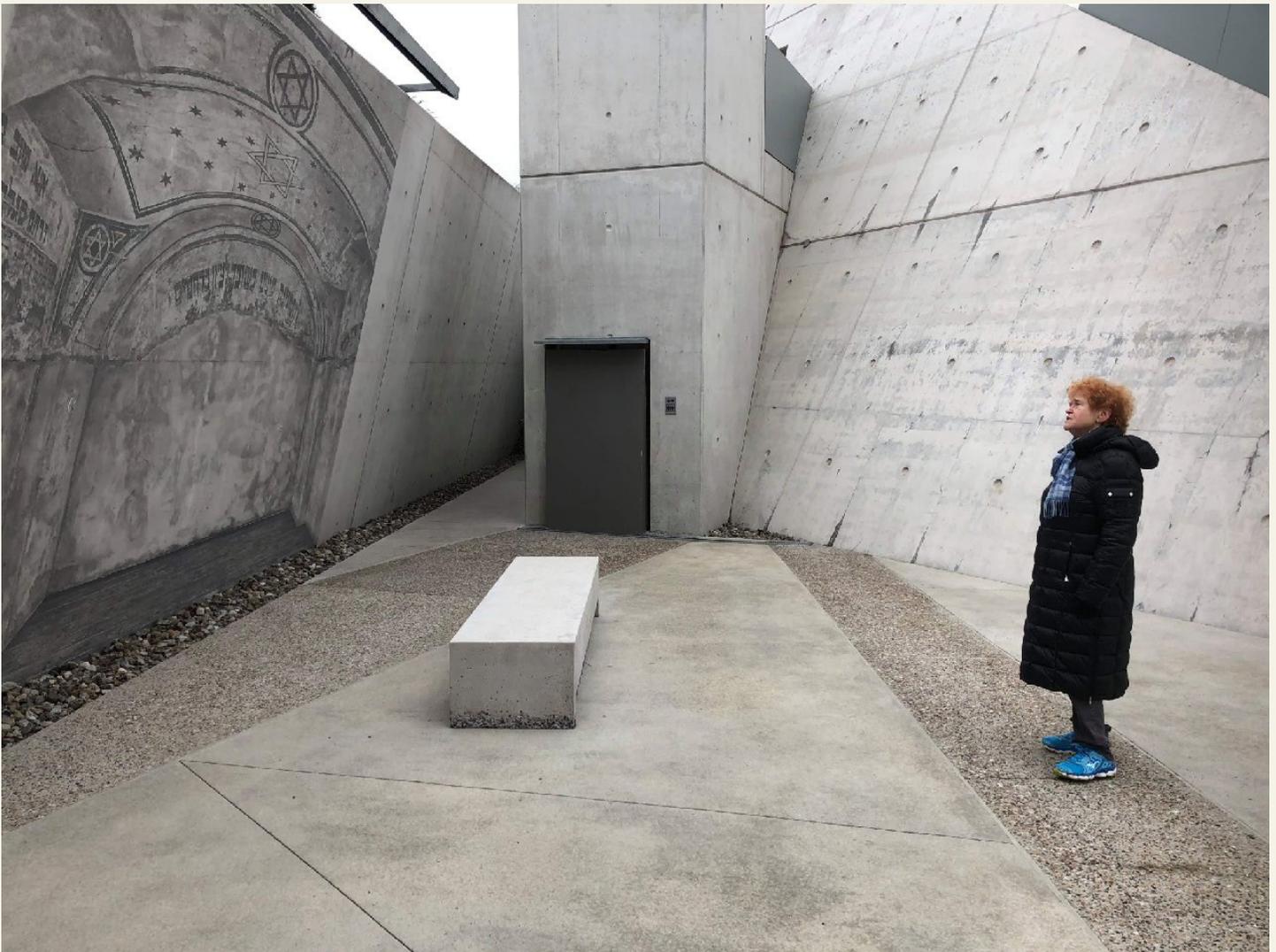
"Usually I'm very skeptical of Holocaust memorials because some of them really

don't convey anything specific about the Holocaust...This I think does an excellent job," Lipstadt said after her tour.

"I think this has a very strong educational element built into the monument itself." Lipstadt said the educational component is not always present at monuments, although the key to having an enriching educational experience lies with the prepara-

tion done by teachers before a student visit.

Lipstadt thought the historical text summaries found close to the entrance were particularly effective at presenting a complex topic in a way that's easy to understand, and she said they were "very honest" about Canada's role in history.



## HEM Workshops Reach Local Teachers and Police

Sheila Hurtig Robertson

Ottawa-area teachers and members of the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) and their partners, which include the RMCP, and Canadian Security Services, explored anti-semitism in workshops led by Bernie Farber and Len Rudner, long-time colleagues who are recognized as experts on issues of hate and antisemitism.

“The last few years has seen an unprecedented rise in antisemitism and many other forms of hatred emanating from the far-right white supremacist movement,” said Farber. “At the same time, we have also seen a more frequent transition from hateful words to acts of racist violence. These workshops provide tools for those on the frontline to understand the roots of hatred, discuss means of recruitment, and identify young and vulner-

able people before they are drawn into the dark world of violent extremist movements.”

Farber is the CEO of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network. His lengthy career has focused on human rights, anti-racism, pluralism and inter-ethnic/faith/race relations. A former chief executive officer of the Canadian Jewish Congress, his expertise has been sought by a broad range of organizations. An Ottawa native, Farber “cut his teeth” working as a social worker with the Ottawa Jewish Community Centre in the 1970s.

Rudner, a member of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, is a Principal at Len Rudner & Associates, a consultancy focusing on community advocacy, diversity, and human rights. He is the former Director of Community Relations and Outreach for the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA).



Bernie Farber, Mina Cohn, Chief Sloly and Len Rudner

### Farber on Facebook Post-Workshops

Mazal tov to Mina Cohn of #CHES and all her volunteers who worked so diligently to provide Ottawa with one of the finest Holocaust Education Month programs on the continent. Much thanks to all the sponsors who have embraced and understood the vital necessity for Holocaust Education. All those who attend these programs should take note of the sponsors and thank them for their support of this endeavour.

Holocaust Education as a tool for learning about diversity, anti-racism, and the evil of bigotry cannot be overstated. As the world turns more populist and demagoguery becomes more prevalent, the Jewish community has a special obligation born out of the Shoah.

We must continue to drive forward the need for “Never Again.” Ottawa’s Holocaust Education Month is doing that and more”.

## Teachers’ Workshop Reflections

Annette Wildgoose,  
CHES Committee Member

An annual feature of HEM, the Teacher’s Workshop was a dive into antisemitism, providing a wealth of information from an historical context to the present-day rise of right wing antisemitic groups.

It was wonderful to see so many new and returning teachers from both the Ottawa Catholic District School Board and the Ottawa School Board. Their willingness to learn and participate in the roundtable discussions and to offer potential solutions to case studies not only encouraged a healthy discourse and sharing of ideas, but also offered insight into the professional responsibilities, teachers shoulder on a daily basis. Continued interest in the importance of including Holocaust Education in their curriculum is to be commended, as we all strive to reinforce the lessons learned and prepare future generations to understand the importance of Never Again!

### OPS Workshop Reflections



### At the Teacher’s Workshop

A participant in the OPS session said: “I have many more questions and will be contacting Mina to get more information about gaps in my understanding of how antisemitism differs from other forms of prejudice.” Added another: “I would like to know more about what I can look for to determine a person’s antisemitic beliefs.”

## Family Reunion Inspires Commitment

Marlene Wolinsky

The seed for my participation on the committee to organize a symposium for 2nd and 3rd Gen survivors during HEM was planted in 2018 when I attended a reunion of my father's family who were from Cologne, Germany. Prior to the reunion, we were asked to record our family history, supported by photos and letters, to document the plight of seven surviving siblings. Our historical narratives were compiled and published in a family memorial book, which was distributed during our reunion.

This personal experience sparked my interest in becoming involved with CHES as I gained new understanding of how differently each of us cope with the past and the tragic loss of family members, and how profound and long-lasting is the impact of our parents' and grandparents' Holocaust experiences, which affect family dynamics in both positive and negative ways. Sharing our diverse stories brought our family closer together and gave us a sense of belonging.

When I reached out to Mina Cohn, initially looking for a place to display and share our family memorial book, I gladly accepted her invitation to meet with other 2nd Gen community members. At this meeting I developed a more comprehensive understanding of what CHES is all about and how I could connect with 2nd Gen survivors in Ottawa and get involved in HEM. Planning a project to bring 2nd and 3rd Gen survivors together in 2019 would, I felt, be a great opportunity to share my experience with others and help community members develop a similar feeling of unity and support.

The consensus was to organize a symposium that would not only look back at how families survived and coped with profound loss but would also examine how to better understand the impact of these experiences on our own lives. With an aging population, we also wanted to look forward, to address how 3rd Gen survivors can be pro-active in their efforts to continue to educate future generations to counter antisemitism. The

opportunity to create a new network of support and action involving 3rd Gen survivors is an exciting prospect.

Experienced members of the CHES committee offered suggestions, sharing their vision of how the symposium could bring together different points of view through presentations by experts in Holocaust education and how this forum could support 2nd and 3rd Gen survivors in Ottawa. It could also be an opportunity to create a new network of support and action for those attending the symposium. Each committee member shared the responsibility of reaching out to speakers who could help our community more clearly understand the impact of the Holocaust on our family dynamics.

For Benita Siemiatycki, a 2nd Gen member of our planning committee, the experience has been personally rewarding. *"As a child of Holocaust survivors, that horrific period of history has played a major role in my life. Even 70 plus years after the end of the war, the effects of limited family members, and the trauma experienced by my parents, keep popping up in expected and unexpected ways. So, it was with this background that I felt I should contribute as a volunteer in Holocaust remembrance. When Mina Cohn asked me to sit on a committee specifically to plan an event geared to the 2nd and 3rd Gens, I felt it was my duty and would*

*be a valuable experience.*

*"Through this committee, I have met other 2nd Gen individuals living in Ottawa and played a role in organizing an excellent symposium to gather other children of survivors to hear speakers with expertise in Holocaust and related areas. Children of survivors, while having much in common with the Jewish community, have an additional identity that can feel isolating."*

Being a member of this committee and creating an event to bring other children of survivors together has been a very rewarding experience. It has given a voice to the 2nd Gen committee members as we shared our stories and helped to plan a meaningful Holocaust event that we hope educated and will support community members. Equally important, it could provide the impetus for 3rd Gen descendants to network, share their families' legacy, and educate others as we continue the fight against antisemitism.

Committee member Esther Rosenberg agrees. *"I too am a child of Holocaust survivors and so it was very meaningful to work on developing a symposium that deals with issues that are relevant to 2nd and 3rd Gen descendants. Also gratifying was spending time with the committee members who share a similar background and were keen to make the event a worthwhile experience."*



Marlene Wolinsky

## Symposium for Descendants of Holocaust Survivors: “Learning from the Past for the Future”

Sheila Hurtig Robertson

This unique, full-day symposium featured a panel discussion and break-out sessions relevant to those whose family members survived the Holocaust. The symposium arose from a need expressed by descendants of Holocaust survivors in Ottawa to understand how family trauma affects them.

The panellists included Dr. Natalia Aleksium who specializes in the social, political, and cultural history of modern East European Jewry. Dr. Eva Fogelman is known for her pioneering work in healing Second Generation and Holocaust child and adult survivors and their families. Dr. Zelda Abramson has written about the displacement, migration, and resettlement experiences of Holocaust survivors who came to Montreal just after WW II. Daniel Brooks is vice president and founder of 3GNY, an educational non-profit organization whose mission is to educate diverse communities about the perils of intolerance and to provide a supportive forum for the descendants

of survivors. Moderator Artur Wilczynski is the Director General of the Communications Security Establishment and former Head of Canada’s Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance when he was Canada’s Ambassador to Norway.

### **Symposium “Powerful, Educational”**

Dr. Natalia Aleksium’s topic was “Families in the Holocaust: Prewar Life Shaping Wartime Experiences”. She shared case studies of families before World War II and what they have taught us.

“Developing Resilience to Historical Trauma” was Dr. Eva Fogelman’s theme. She blames media for generalizing the negative effects of trauma but says the resilience that exists is rarely discussed. For example, she said, people had no hope for a group of orphan children survivors liberated from Buchenwald, but they were able to thrive and evolve from victim to being a Jewish child. A prime example is Eli Wiesel and his emotional account of reciting Kaddish with other Buchenwald orphans. She noted

that there are very few abusers amongst survivors, which she attributes to the love survivors experienced as children before the Holocaust.

Dr. Zelda Abramson, author of *The Montreal Shtetl: Making Home after the Holocaust*, explained that in 1952 her parents immigrated to a neighbourhood in Montreal where almost everyone was a Holocaust survivor. Even the Chinese dry cleaners spoke Yiddish. Her world view was shaped by being surrounded by survivors. She was determined to keep her private and public lives separate but that changed in 2005, a few months before her mother’s death, when she realized she wanted to learn more about her parents’ lives.

As her research progressed, she was left with the question of why Canadian Jews dissociated from Holocaust survivors, who were often poor and marginalized and seemed to pose a threat to Canadian Jews who felt successfully assimilated. She noted that the immigrant experience of survivors can be helpful in how we see our current policies on accepting refugees in Canada. On the one hand, we have increasing local pressure to accept people from war-torn countries; on the other is American President Trump’s push-back on security grounds.

Daniel Brooks’ topic was “The Urgency of Holocaust Education in the 21st Century”. When preparing for his bar mitzvah, he became aware that he had few relatives and so he started to learn as much as he could about the past. He discovered there was no programming or groups for grandchildren of survivors. Eventually he developed a mission to provide a forum to tell stories to the next generation. It grew from five people and now his organization, 3GNY, has 2,000 members. In sharing a personal story of his grandmother’s life in the ghetto, he said such stories are important for students, and can’t simply be learned in a textbook. There’s an extra relevance in this link to a survivor. It’s about preserving and passing on the truth.



Standing in the back from left Artur Wilczynski, Daniel Brooks, Mina Cohn, Dr. Zelda Abramson, Dr. Natalia Aleksium-Madrzak and Dr. Eva Fogelman.



Memorial candles dedicated to children who perished in the Holocaust were provided to each participant at the end of the program. The candles, a special project of the Symposium subcommittee, are a tangible way of remembering and of teaching about the Holocaust. Lighting such a candle makes the children come alive for 24 hours as we acknowledge their names in our homes in freedom.

## Welcoming Kenra Mroz to the CHES Committee

"I am an English, Writer's Craft, and Special Education teacher at Sir Robert Borden High School in Ottawa. I am also the school's Equity and Diversity co-representative and the co-ordinator of its Social Justice Club. Holocaust history and legacy have always been integral components of my teaching practice. I firmly believe that Holocaust education is a serious responsibility that requires ongoing personal and professional development.

"This past summer I participated in

the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem's Summer Scholarship program (at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem). The seminars, workshops, and field trips not only helped to expand and enrich my focus, but also inspired and encouraged me to develop and strengthen my commitment to Holocaust education. I am pleased to be actively working with CHES and am looking forward to continuing to work with students, colleagues, and communities in order to promote awareness, empowerment, and positive change."

## Mosovic Speaks, Students Listen



Kenra Mroz

David (Dave) Moskovic recently spoke with my two grade nine classes. We have finished an intensive Holocaust study unit and the students have been applying what they have learned and developed through this unit towards a greater understanding of the profound and lasting impact of discrimination, as well as towards

an understanding of how the events of the Holocaust must be recognized and used as a means of promoting positive change in our world. We have made it a point to examine and discuss how the legacy of the Holocaust serves as an important reminder of the need to work towards a culture of inclusion and kindness.

Both of Dave's presentations went extremely well and the experience was deeply meaningful to all of us. I followed-up with class discussions and the students commented how impressed they are with Dave's courage, understanding, energy, kindness, and open-hearted messages.

## Commentary: Who Will Remember?

Dr. Art Leader,  
CHES Committee Member

"There are events of such overbearing magnitude that one ought to not remember them all the time, but one must not forget them either. Such an event is the Holocaust." The Rabbi of Bluzhov, Rabbi Israel Spira, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*

For Holocaust survivors, there is no forgetting. For everyone else, we need to capture survivor testimonies so we can remember. However, with each day, another survivor and another eyewitness to the evils of the Holocaust disappears. Today, the children of survivors and their children must continue to remind society what the Holocaust meant to Jewish families and mankind, and to combat the antisemitic merchants of hate who deny the Holocaust.

To read more: <https://carleton.ca/ches/wp-content/uploads/Art-Leader-PDF.pdf>

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