

Words from the Director



Mina Cohn

Dealing with the imposed changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic is a challenge for everyone. We thank all the doctors, nurses, healthcare staff and all the essential workers who work tirelessly on the front lines to help the sick and make sure we all stay healthy.

This year we mark 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz and the end of WW II, committing to remember those who perished and honouring those who survived. During January 2020, CHES was a partner in two important commemorative projects: “Remembering the Holocaust: Conveying its Lessons” on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau on Parliament Hill on January 24th and the International Holocaust Memorial ceremony on January 27th at Library and Archives Canada. (See articles on both events below.)

The event on Parliament Hill was initiated by Senators Donna Dasko and Marc Gold, a first by senators and the first collaborative event involving CHES and senators. By all accounts, the event was timely, memorable, and poignant. To show our appreciation for their initiative, thank you letters were sent to all partners in this commemoration. The letters

were also an opportunity to introduce CHES’ work.

A special thank you to CHES member Annette Wildgoose for the interview with Brody Hamilton of *National Post Radio*, and to Marlene Wolinsky and Marion Silver for their interview with Stuart Miller-Davis, a reporter for the current affairs show *Midweek* on CKCU about January 27th commemoration (see links to the interviews below).

Early on, as we became aware of the Covid Pandemic, an important Law Enforcement Workshop for the RCMP, scheduled for March 14th, was cancelled. As more restrictions were imposed, all the other plans and projects of CHES and our partners were cancelled as well, including

- the Ottawa Choral Society production of *Annelies* scheduled for March 29th at the Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre in Ottawa.
- the Anne Frank Exhibit in cooperation with the Canadian War Museum, scheduled to open on April 2nd.
- the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem’s Ambassadors of Change Program.
- the National Holocaust Memorial event scheduled for April 21st at the Canadian War Museum.

CHES member and survivor Elly Bollegraaf had been invited to speak at the opening of the Anne Frank exhibit and the National Holocaust Memorial event. CHES was working with Yad Vashem and Carleton University Media Centre to edit Elly’s testimonial to create a visual that would complement the event theme of Rescuers.

When Yad Vashem’s April 21st event was cancelled, the understanding that all Jewish communities across Canada would have to cancel their Yom Hashoah ceremonies became a reality. The Azrieli Foundation approached us to discuss how to replace these events. CHES partnered with other Canadian Holocaust Centres, Yad Vashem, the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, the Azrieli Foundation, and the March of the Living to create and to

present the first-ever, cross-Canada virtual Yom Hashoah commemoration on April 20th. The commemoration began with a message from Prime-Minister Justin Trudeau:

https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2020/04/21/statement-prime-minister-yom-hashoah?fbclid=IwAR39cmYao7rKZubTdB_vr9hi7n7GpG-Fkk8HAYAD9chWg9kZ2iDfoT6lmitY.

CHES was honoured to be part of this unique project and we thank the organizing committee for their dedication and hard work. In less than a month, they created a memorable program that united Canadians across the country. From the material CHES provided, two participants in our testimonial project, Tova Clark and David Moskovic, were featured among Holocaust survivors from across Canada as was a message from CHES (see below).

Due to Covid-19, for the first time in 32 years, the March of the Living occurring yearly on Holocaust Remembrance Day was also cancelled. Click on the link below to view and to join *The March of the Living Plaque Project*, enabling the tradition of placing messages on plaques on the train tracks of Auschwitz-Birkenau to continue <https://nevermeansnever.mtl.org/>.

Since September 2019, CHES has been working on an educational program for Liberation 75, a global gathering of Holocaust survivors, their descendants, educators, and friends scheduled for May 31st – June 2nd in Toronto. That event has been postponed until 2021. For the scope of CHES’ participation, read *Liberation 75: CHES’ Participation Confirmed*.

In my words I included details of events that have happened since January 2020 and of those that could have happened if not for Covid-19. Looking ahead, we will see better days and overcome the Covid-19 challenges. CHES will continue to create meaningful educational programs working with existing colleagues and reaching out to new partners. Until then, please follow the instructions of the Canadian Public Health Services, stay indoors, and keep safe.

Remembrance: 75 Years After Auschwitz-Birkenau Liberation

By Sheila Hurtig Robertson,
CHES member

Survivors, ambassadors, politicians, and representatives from 10 partner organizations, including the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES), gathered in Ottawa on January 24th to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Welcomed by Senators Donna Dasko and Marc Gold, and Jack Jedwab, CEO of the Association of Canadian Studies and a son of Holocaust survivors, the audience listened attentively as speaker after speaker paid poignant homage to the six million “silenced” victims of the Holocaust and warned of the current terrifying and unforeseen rise of antisemitism in many parts of the world, including Canada.

Senator Dasko welcomed dignitaries from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania, Israel, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Ukraine. She reminded us of the horrific scene that awaited soldiers of the First Ukrainian Front as they entered Auschwitz: 648 corpses, more than 7,000 living skeletons, and six storehouses filled with hundreds of thousands of dresses and suits, 110,000 shoes, 3,800 suitcases, 12,000 pots and pans, 40 kilograms of glasses, and several tons of hair shaved from women’s heads. She mentioned a Soviet soldier, who had already seen so many deaths, who said they had now “seen things we will never forget as long as we live.” And she thanked the survivors for bearing witness.

Senator Gold brought a message from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who specifically mentioned “the scourge of antisemitism and hatred that is becoming all too common once again.” He wrote: “The murder of 6 million Jews by the brutal and antisemitic regime started with a slow erosion of rights, and the normalization of discrimination. We cannot permit the passage of time to diminish

our resolve never to allow such horrors to happen again.”

Jack Jedwab spoke of his mother, Bella Gelbart, who survived Auschwitz and of his grandmother Fremet Gelbart, and his aunts Luba, Sara, and Chaya Jedwab, who did not. He told of his mother’s last moments with Fremet who, realizing death was imminent, urged her daughter to survive; somehow, she did. Years later Jack and his family were with Bella when she returned to Auschwitz, a visit that rekindled painful memories. He believes the world has not learned the lessons of Auschwitz, listing as proof the many genocidal massacres that have since occurred.

In his welcoming remarks, Steven Garten, Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Israel, spoke of having “an obligation to the victims of Auschwitz as antisemitism flares [today].” He noted that that “antisemitism thrives on the Internet where people encounter untruths in the privacy of their homes and so the lessons of Auschwitz are lost in the cacophony of gunshots.”

Eva Kuper, who survived as a hidden child and emigrated to Canada in 1949, was born in Warsaw at the onset of World War II and “survived by a series of miraculous events involving luck, coincidence, and the courage and faith

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Her Excellency Michaëlle Jean (R) and Hilda Bleyer share memories following the presentation

Remembrance: 75 Years After Auschwitz-Birkenau Liberation Con't

of family members and strangers.” She explained that because “the chances of survival were so small, all such stories are improbable.” In her case, the actions of an aunt and a Roman Catholic nun, Sister Clara, enabled Eva’s survival. “Mine is a story of hope,” said the Montreal-based retired educator.”

Dr. Rebecca Wittman, an associate professor of history at the University of Toronto, studies the Holocaust and postwar Germany, trials of Nazi perpetrators and terrorists, and German legal history. Querying what it means to “Never Forget”, she said it is important to try to comprehend the Holocaust and attention must be paid to “apathy, indifference, and collaboration.” While noting the positive action of today’s Germany in placing a Holocaust memorial in the centre of Berlin, she added that it was decades before such actions happened. Instead, in the years following the war, only perpetrators who displayed “cruel, sadistic, and aberrant behaviour were prosecuted and not ‘order followers’”.

Jean-Paul Samputu is a Rwandan singer and songwriter and an Ambassador of Peace. Now living in Ottawa, the survivor of the Rwandan Genocide sang of healing and love and then spoke of the killing of his parents, two brothers, and a sister. His father was killed by a friend, whom Jean-Paul spent years tracking, only to spare his life following an epiphany. Together they organized a Forgiveness Campaign and today he preaches peace and reconciliation, not revenge.

Judy Young Drache, a child Holocaust survivor, retired civil servant, and member of CHES, touched on the “quiet, polite years of antisemitism” when Toronto law firms did not hire Jews, when Canada’s official policy towards Jewish

refugees was “None is Too Many”, and many social clubs would not accept Jews as members as recently as the 1970s. She then turned to positive steps Canada has since taken, including The Report of the Special Committee on Hate Propaganda in Canada (<https://www.worldcat.org/title/report-to-the-minister-of-justice-of-the-special-committee-on-hate-propaganda-in-canada/oclc/85755894>) which was followed by a “significant body of anti-hate legislation and anti-racism policies” at home and internationally. Judy quoted Hon. Irwin Cotler who memorably said: “Indifference in the face of evil is acquiescence with evil itself; it is complicity with evil” and, from the Auschwitz Museum, “The Holocaust actually did not start from the gas chambers. This hatred gradually developed from words, stereotypes, and prejudice through legal exclusion, dehumanization, and escalating violence.” For her, the Holocaust “is not an event ... It is part of me, it goes on, is never finished, and the older one gets, the more it weighs on one.” See below for the full text of her remarks.

One of Judy’s Positive Examples

Renowned Israeli British street artist Solomon Souza has painted a commemorative mural of Jewish football players and British POWs who were sent to Nazi camps, to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January. The artwork is being displayed on a wall on the outside of the West Stand at Stamford Bridge and is part of Chelsea FC’s ‘Say No to Antisemitism’ campaign. The club has also adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism, the first sports team in the world to do so.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/274444>

Dafina Savic is the founder and executive director of Romanpipe, a Montreal-based not-for-profit organization seeking to fight discrimination against Roma worldwide. She called for recognition of the Romany genocide through an Act of Parliament because “Roma stories remain forgotten and untold and Roma history has been erased.”

The final speaker was Michaëlle Jean, the 27th Governor-General of Canada and the former Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. She mentioned meeting a survivor during a program she made for The Passionate Eye and how his words affected her deeply, unaware that the survivor’s wife – Hilda Bleyer – was in the audience. It was a profoundly moving moment for Hilda, who shared a warm moment with Madame Jean after the presentation. The lesson to be drawn from her wide-ranging, passionate speech is the need for “constant vigilance” and being on the alert for early warning signs through the use of words such as vermin and garbage to describe a people. “The target of such language is hate,” she said. “To do nothing would be to let the other side win by default.” And she fittingly quoted author James Baldwin: “The glorification of one race and the consequent debasement of another – or others – has been and always will be a recipe for murder.”

At their core, the lessons of the commemoration convey urgency: From the duty to remember comes the duty to react; educating the younger generation about the Holocaust is imperative; and, indifference to the difficulties befalling others can never be an option.

Remembering the Holocaust; Conveying its Lessons on Parliament Hill

By Judy Young Drache

Survivors, ambassadors, politicians, and representatives from 10 partner organizations, including the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES), gathered in Ottawa on January 24th, 2020, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Welcomed by Senators Donna Dasko and Marc Gold, and Jack Jedwab, CEO of the Association of Canadian Studies and a son of Holocaust survivors, the audience listened attentively as speaker after speaker paid poignant homage to the six million “silenced” victims of the Holocaust and warned of the current terrifying and unforeseen rise of antisemitism in many parts of the world, including Canada.

The speakers included Judy Young Drache, a child Holocaust survivor, retired civil servant, and member of CHES

who touched on the “quiet, polite years of antisemitism” when Toronto law firms did not hire Jews, when Canada’s official policy towards Jewish refugees was “None is Too Many”, and many social clubs would not accept Jews as members as recently as the 1970s. Following is the full text of her thoughtful remarks.

“I may not remember but I can never forget.”

Canada is now generally considered to be an example to other countries for its openness to pluralism and cultural diversity with well-entrenched and extensive policies and programs of multiculturalism at all levels of government covering a wide range of areas (from health and social services, to the arts, to politics, and education, including anti-racism education at all levels of the public school systems. In fact,

Canada is usually praised for its legislative and policy responses to social inequality, discrimination, and racism, including antisemitism.

Of course, we all know that this this was not always so. I am not going back to the years before WWII when overt and crude forms of antisemitism were part of life in Canada - when for instance a largely Jewish baseball team was attacked by fascist sympathizers at a baseball game at the Christie Pits Riot in Toronto (1933). And I am sure most of you know that during the Nazi era and WWII, right up to 1947, “None is Too Many” was sadly Canada’s official policy towards Jewish refugees trying to flee from Europe. I will just

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Judy Young Drache with her husband Arthur Drache

mention a couple of anecdotal examples from a little closer to our time.

Not too long ago, in 1965, when my husband was finishing law school at the U of Toronto, his then professor Bora Laskin, (later Chief Justice of Canada – and the first Jew appointed to the Supreme Court! – by Pierre Trudeau in 1970) gave him a list of Toronto law-firms not to apply to for an articling job as they would not hire a Jew. When Laskin was appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal in 1965, he was the first Jewish lawyer appointed there. Traditionally until then appointments to the Ontario Court of Appeal had alternated between Catholics and Protestants. So, on Laskin's appointment, some members of the Ontario legal community wondered if he was going to be considered a Catholic or a Protestant – so the traditional succession could continue.

Many of you will know that the Granite Club of Toronto (and similar social clubs across Canada) would not accept Jews as members into the late 60's or early 70's. I also recall being surprised when an older colleague in the Multiculturalism Programs of the Secretary of State department where I started working in the mid 70's told me that McGill (which had accepted me into its MA program when I arrived as an immigrant to Canada in 1967) was well-known for excluding Jewish students or faculty well into the late 60's, as did many other Canadian universities.

Remember, these were already the “quiet” polite years of antisemitism, no longer the crude ones from the 30's like Christie Pits. By the 60's and 70's this kind of action was no longer socially acceptable.

If we look at some of the steps Canada has taken since the Holocaust to deal with hate speech and antisemitism specifically, we do find some positive threads. More or less at the same time as the above examples was the first major attempt to introduce legislation against hate speech and its promotion on the basis of a serious study which was The Report of the Special Committee on Hate Propaganda). The report was published in 1966 and is largely forgotten now but was the basis for subsequent legislation.

For this report a blue-ribbon panel was appointed in 1965, chaired by McGill Law Dean and later International Court of Justice Judge Maxwell Cohen, and included then professor and later-to-be Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau as well as Saul Hayes of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Professor Marc McGuigan (later Minister of Justice), and others. The committee examined the pernicious effects of hate propaganda and cautiously recommended a legislative response. As a result of this study the Criminal Code was amended in 1970 to include various anti-hate provisions. That the Holocaust and antisemitism were driving forces behind this is clear from the explicit references to genocide and the public promotion of hate against identifiable groups. Since that time Canada has developed a significant body of anti-hate legislation and anti-racism policies (and is a signatory to many UN and other international conventions against racism). But even so we are not immune to incidents of discrimination, racism, hate speech, and antisemitism.

On this International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we come together to

ask what can we learn from the horror that was the Holocaust? Over the years, I have found some guides for helping to answer that question. Former Justice Minister Irwin Cotler has frequently reminded us that the Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed the importance of human rights and anti-hate legislation by upholding their constitutionality – even using words often repeated from the Auschwitz Museum's permanent exhibition: “the Holocaust did not begin in the gas chambers – it began with words” : words of exclusion and hate. In Nazi Germany such words became a state-sanctioned ideology of hate, incitement to hate and led to the demonization of “the other.” And the Holocaust continued with the industry of death on an enormous scale and utilized a whole “technology of terror.” But it could not have succeeded so well without the collaboration of others, the conspiracy of silence, and because of the indifference of many. Author and teacher Elie Wiesel, one of the most famous survivors of the Holocaust, considered indifference to be as deadly as murder. “Indifference is always a friend to the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor – never his victim.” Irwin Cotler adds: “Indifference in the face of evil is complicity in evil.”

In my mind, one of the most important lessons of the Holocaust has to do with remembrance – especially for Holocaust survivors who were witnesses to the evil or who were personally affected by it. I believe survivors have an important role to play in standing up for the truth and for justice. They can fight the deniers and effectively oppose those who want to minimize, distort, falsify history, or just misrepresent the facts. A well-known 94 year old Hungarian survivor, Eva Fahidy, participated in the recent trial in Germany of Oscar Groening, a former official from Auschwitz, and was able to testify

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that he was not always in the office doing accounts as he claimed but was present at the selections and the sorting of the victims' belongings.

I firmly believe the truth is very important, especially for Holocaust survivors who need to be bulwarks against denial and falsification. We cannot change the past, but we can and do learn from it and this helps us to understand our present better.

As a child survivor I do not remember what happened to my family and me when the murderous part of the Holocaust came to Budapest in the spring and summer of 1944. I was just 1 year old when my parents, three grandparents, and various other family members were taken first to a brickyard outside of Budapest and then forced into the cattle cars of one of the last trains with which the Nazis and their Hungarian collaborators deported about 440,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau, never to return. I was handed to a relative and remained hidden until liberation, although in fact I remained hidden for much longer than the end of the war and the liberation of the camps. I have had to do a lot of research to find out the facts about my family and myself; and I am still learning the lessons.

I may not remember but I can never forget. For me the Holocaust is not an event (an unimaginable, terrible one at that) to remember like a car accident or an outing that turned bad. It is part of me, it goes on, is never finished (and the older one gets the more it weighs on one).

And this is so not just for me but for my children and perhaps my grandchildren (though hopefully not for their children). People speak of "Transgenerational trauma", which may be theoretical and academic, but for me the Holocaust is a reality of my everyday life. The search for the parents and grandparents I never knew continues. As does the search for the meaning of my survival.

But of course remembering by itself is not enough, one must remind others so on this Holocaust Remembrance Day we should also come together to remind ourselves of the situation of those who are now suffering around the world as a result of hatred and exclusion, or attempted genocide. Canada has tried to help in some of those situations, but so far with not much result in the case of the Rohingya who are being persecuted (and killed), with 800,000 having been expelled from Myanmar or who sought refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh. Recently their plight was in the news again, with no solution in sight, though at least the International Court of Justice just ordered the Burmese authorities to "protect the Rohingya Muslims from genocide." Let us hope this has some result.

Unfortunately, hatred, racism still do terrible things to people; and there are countries in which genocide and strife happen among groups on the basis of religion, ethnicity, skin colour, language, and so on. Rwanda was spoken of here this morning: Canadian General Romeo Dallaire who headed the UN peacekeep-

ing force there, has not been able to recover from what he witnessed; but especially from the inability to help. What he has trouble getting over is that this was an avoidable genocide; the world knew, he knew, but he was helpless against it.

For the Jews, and others who were persecuted during the Holocaust, the main lesson – other than the one of having the proverbial packed suitcase ready to flee - is not really a lesson but an obligation and a responsibility: never to forget, and to speak out against hatred in all its forms, to educate and tell the truth, to warn, to seek justice for victims and those in trouble.

For me personally: this is the responsibility to share the truth; to tell my story about where exclusion, hate, indifference can lead to; the responsibility to remind the people around me to be mindful and to express the hope that by sharing and telling what happened the current generation and the next one can help to make the world a better place.

This responsibility includes the work I do with CHES as a volunteer. CHES members are all volunteers and they include a number of survivors. Our main goal is to develop educational programs to promote knowledge and understanding of the history and legacy of the Holocaust. Among examples of our activities are video testimonies of survivors online (also archived at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), education work with teachers, students, academics, and Holocaust survivors.

Moving, Emotional International Holocaust Remembrance at Library and Archives Canada

Close to 250 people attended the International Holocaust Remembrance Day event, held at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) on January 27th. Along with dignitaries were local Holocaust survivors Elly Bollegraaf, Kati Morrison, and Vera Gara.

Partners for the event included CHES, LAC, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, and the Wallenberg Citation Initiative. Emcee was Ashbury College student Taylor Ages, representing March of the Living.

Brief opening remarks were delivered by LAC's Director General Robert McIntosh and local MPP John Fraser.

The keynote speaker was Pinchas Gutter, who delivered a moving, emotional, and powerful speech covering a range of topics around his personal story of survival as well as his general outlook.

"Indeed, we are profoundly challenged," Gutter said of the struggles facing the world in 2020.

He said hope in the immediate post-war period turned to challenges not long after, but to this day he continues to hope of a brighter future.

Gutter shared details on his happy life in pre-war Poland as a member of a thriving Hasidic family. Things took a sharp turn when, at eight-years-old, he saw his father taken by the Gestapo and beaten in the family wine cellar. He told of his years spent in the Warsaw ghetto - an "apocalyptic hell". As the Nazis moved in on Erev Pesach April 19th, 1943, Gutter and others were hiding in a bunker, but eventually marched out and ended up in Majdanek. In part, Gutter attributes his survival to his father instructing him to tell authorities he was older than he was.

Gutter detailed his experiences in Majdanek followed by a number of work camps. He eventually ended up at Buchenwald for a few weeks towards the end

of the war and was finally liberated from Thereisenstadt.

He spoke of having a secret Bar Mitzvah and being told he would be a good Jew and outlive Hitler. "It was important not just to survive as a body - a 'what' - but as a person. A 'who.'"

Gutter closed by saying he has anger towards deniers, but also towards those who accuse Jews of marching to their death like sheep. Gutter says he saw Jews fighting constantly, not just to live, but to live as Jews. He brought his speech into the present, saying he is hurt by images from around the world today such as people living in tent cities and fleeing Myanmar. He mentioned telling his story in new virtual reality projects and is the first survivor to take part in the USC Shoah Foundation's Dimensions in Testimony, where a hologram-like image of himself can have interactive conversations with people asking him questions.

"As long as I have breath in my body and legs to carry me, I intend to share my story," Gutter said in closing.

Before and after the keynote, the audience was treated to a violin solo performance by Ralitsa Tcholakova. Rabbi Eytan Kenter led Kaddish and Martin Sampson of CIJA offered closing comments. The audience then held up signs saying "#weremember" for a photograph for the World Jewish Congress' campaign.

Interview with Marlene Wolinsky and Marion Silver

<<https://soundcloud.com/capital-news-online/midweek-january-29-2020>>

From The Canadian Jewish News: <https://www.cjnews.com/living-jewish/holocaust-survivors-testimony-will-live-on-as-holograms>

CHS member Abigail Bimman's interview with Pinchas Gutter on Global News:

<https://globalnews.ca/video/6470719/how-holocaust-survivors-are-keeping-their-stories-alive>



Participants in January 27th 2020 Ottawa-International Holocaust-remembrance

Cross-Country Virtual Yom Hashoah a Huge Success

When the COVID-19 crisis forced the cancellation of the annual Yom Hashoah commemoration, the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, the Azrieli Foundation, the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, and March of the Living organized a cross-Canada online memorial that was aired on April 20th.

As the organizers explained: “While this is a disheartening choice to have made, we hope that it can help prevent wider spread of this disease and loss of life, particularly amongst our most vulnerable populations.

“Nonetheless, we recognize the centrality of marking Yom Hashoah for our communities and the importance of the day, and we know many people will look to our organizations for guidance and leadership at this time.

“Our plans have now shifted, and we are excited to present a collaborative, digital community commemoration opportunity, with pre-recorded and livestream content.

“We believe that this challenging situation forces us to look for a silver lining, and together as partners in Holocaust education, we are embracing a new opportunity to unite our communities across Canada and make this year’s commemoration a national one.

“Our program will mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust and will focus on the resilience and faith of the survivors. We hope to share stories of how they rebuilt their lives despite the trauma and loss that they endured. We believe that this message will resonate with our audiences, especially today.”

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To view the cross-country program, click on <https://vimeo.com/411138928/1a5942b7c5>

The thank you note below from Rachel Libman and the Neuberger team captures the highlights of the Virtual Yom Hashoah.

Dear Partners,

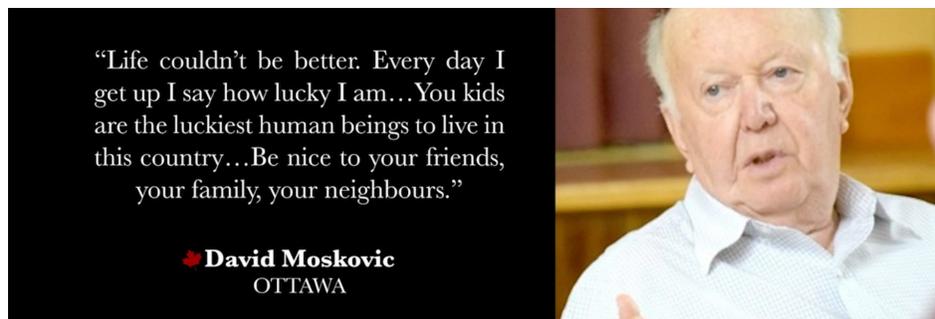
After a very hectic week, I wanted to take a moment to thank each of you for partnering with us to present the cross-Canada virtual Yom Hashoah commemoration this past Monday.

The feedback has been tremendous, and I hope you have received similar comments from your communities ... We took a challenging moment and created something that resonated with audiences far beyond our expectations. We heard from young families and older adults, survivors, descendants, and elected officials, people who would normally attend and those who took advantage of being home to participate in a way they never normally would have.

Thank you for being a part of it with us. It was a very special experience for us and we are deeply appreciative to you for that.

Comments from the viewers (emails, private messages, social media, disqus):

- *“Tonight’s commemoration was very lovely – impactful, relevant, moving and beautifully executed.”*
- *“Sitting in my home and watching it on my computer created such a connection, more than being in a large audience. I can’t thank you enough and everyone involved for connecting us, as Jews, in such a meaningful way by remembering the Holocaust.”*



David Moskovic shared his message at the cross Canada Holocaust Memorial

- *“What a moving experience showing how people can work cooperatively together. This commemoration shines a light on a very dark time, showing how the ugly face of hatred can tear us apart while providing hope for the present and the future.”*
- *“Let me congratulate you on putting together such a beautiful, meaningful, and hopeful programme. It was truly extraordinary and was especially necessary for those of us experiencing such sadness in Nova Scotia. Thank you.”*
- *“What an amazing program. Thanks to all of you for the time and effort in making this such a worthwhile experience in spite of the difficulties of this time.”*
- *“Jake Epstein struck the right note and all the components of the programme were very moving.”*
- *“Thank you for the inspirational stories of survival and the courage to come to Canada to help build a great united country.”*
- *“It was very meaningful and so beautiful that even though we couldn’t be together physically we were united for the first time all across the country virtually.”*
- *“... sincere appreciation from members of the community for making the effort to provide such an impressive program at this unique time.”*
- *“Thank you for all your efforts in making tonight’s program a memorable and powerful educational tool to honour our survivors and their stories.”*
- *“It captured the essence of why we observe this perfectly, considering the fact we are all at home these days.”*
- *“The programme ...for Yom HaShoah with Jake Epstein as MC was phenomenal. We both felt the balance in the programme was just right and want to let you and everyone concerned know.”*



Tova Clark offered inspiring thoughts to future generations about resiliency and survival, at the cross-Canada memorial Service

CHES was privileged to take part as a sponsor with Director Mina Cohn speaking through video. We are pleased to present her comments below:

“Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining us on this very special program. My name is Mina Cohn, and I am the director of the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship at the Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada’s capital. I want to extend a warm welcome to the survivors and students in Ottawa and across Canada who joined us on this special evening.

“On April 21st, Ottawa’s Jewish community expected to gather with survivors, dignitaries, and politicians for the National Holocaust Memorial ceremony at the Canadian War Museum, as we do each year, to commemorate the lives of those who perished in the Holocaust and to honour those who survived.

“Sadly, as we deal with the necessary restrictions enacted because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the commemorative event has been cancelled. Instead, we have been provided with an opportunity to partici-

pate in Canada’s first-ever multi-community memorial program based on the twin themes of Resilience and Liberation.

“CHES, the most recent Holocaust Centre in Canada, is proud to participate in this unique program. We share the hope that together our institutions can unite Canadians as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust, pay tribute to the resilience of the survivors, and celebrate their liberation.

“Today we fight a global war against an invisible enemy. An enemy that challenges our everyday

lives and upends our daily routines. Many worry: Can we defeat this enemy?

“Holocaust survivors have much to teach us when it comes to overcoming extremely difficult and life-threatening situations. They survived the worst genocide of the 20th century, traumatized and often alone. They did not define their lives based on trauma and loss, but on their ability to rise from the ashes, bear witness to their pasts, and rebuild their lives. It is their resilience and resourcefulness that helped them overcome all odds. Every one of us can learn from them.

Students View Virtual Online Cross-Canada Yom Hashoah Commemoration

By Kenra Mroz, CHES member and an English teacher at Sir Robert Borden High School



On the evening of April 20th, Canadians from across the country came together to join in a virtual Yom Hashoah remembrance event. As an educator who uses Holocaust history and legacy a great deal in my teaching practice, I felt that this would be a unique and meaningful experience for my students. I decided to create an optional Thought Share assignment wherein my students could contribute comments, as well as respond to, and ask questions of, one another. I was very pleased with not only how many students decided to participate, but also with the maturity, depth, and insight of their observations and exchanges.

The students, aged 15- to 18-years-old, emphasized that “we can all learn” from the stories of survivors and that we must “do [our] best to treat everyone equally.” They were “glad ... to hear what it was like to be liberated and to escape the terror and pain that the Nazis inflicted upon the Jewish population.” One student, whose family was significantly affected by the Holocaust, also pointed out that the trials and sufferings endured did not end with Liberation. He shared the reality that “this tragedy has left an eternal sense of emptiness within our family” and went on to explain that this is why the expression “never again” means so much to him.

Many students highlighted the “strength of the Jewish people” and said “the world must stay committed in ensuring that such a horrific event is never forgotten or repeated.” The comments some of my Jewish students wrote about their own personal connections to the Holocaust

prompted their peers to reach out through questions and expressions of support. When asked if he would be comfortable sharing “any family stories”, one student replied: “The unfortunate truth is that my family does have stories related to the Holocaust. My great-grandmother was a survivor and was taken by the Nazis. She has shared many difficult moments she has had to endure.” All of my students commented upon how they were captivated by “the many moving segments” of the event, and some were “left in tears” due to the emotional impact of many of the survivor stories. Above all, they were firmly of the belief that “it is time to use the power of choice to create positive change.”

Overall, this was a highly successful student commentary collaborative. My students genuinely appreciated the opportunity to “tune-in” to the Yom Hashoah virtual event and share their thought-provoking personal reactions and responses.

Covid-19 Forces Postponement of Liberation75

By Marilyn Sinclair, Founder, and the Liberation75 team

It is with tremendous disappointment that we announce the postponement of Liberation75, which was to be held in Toronto from May 31st to June 2nd.

The safety of our attendees - especially Holocaust Survivors - is our greatest concern. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe it is only prudent to reschedule.

Liberation75 was created as a global gathering to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation from the Holocaust. Our mission has been to remember victims, honour Survivors, showcase the future of Holocaust education, discuss and take action against antisemitism, and commit to protecting free-

dom, diversity, human rights and inclusion.

Over the past two years, more than 300 Survivors, educators, speakers, exhibitors, artists, donors, committee members, volunteers, Dine-Around hosts, and participating organizations have worked tirelessly on this passion project.

We will announce updates for this once-in-a-lifetime event as soon as possible. We are committed to bringing the world together to mark this important point in time and will inform you of new dates and venue(s) as they are determined.

Thank you to everyone who reached out with kind words. We are most grateful for your ongoing support of Liberation75. Stay healthy and safe.



Marilyn Sinclair, the founder of Liberation75

Liberation 75: CHES' Participation Confirmed

By Sheila Hurtig Robertson,
CHES member

Note: In the expectation that Liberation 75 will be re-scheduled for 2021, we present the article below which spells out CHES' planned involvement.

Liberation 75, a once-in-a-lifetime "global gathering of Holocaust survivors, descendants, educators, and friends", will commemorate and celebrate the 75th anniversary of liberation from the Holocaust. Gathering in Toronto, May 31st to June 2nd, will be over 3000 participants, including 7500 students and 600 educators supported by over 135 organizations, including the Sherman and Azrieli Foundations.

Liberation 75 founder Marilyn Sinclair, the daughter of a Hungarian Holocaust survivor, attended the Canadian Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in 1985. "That gathering instilled in me a life-long commitment to Holocaust remembrance and education," she says. She adds that with the gradual loss of survivors, "the need is greater than ever to inspire others to continue this important work." As noted on its website

(<https://www.liberation75.org/>), Liberation 75 "will explore the past, pre-

sent, and future of Holocaust education and remembrance through captivating discussions and presentations, interactive workshops, survivor testimony, films, artistic and musical performances, unique exhibits, ground-breaking technology ..."

"Given that the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES) develops educational programs and activities that promote knowledge and understanding of the history and legacy of the Holocaust, presenting a workshop at Liberation 75 is a unique opportunity to share our learnings and to benefit from the wisdom of so many distinguished speakers, including Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella, Hon. Irwin Cotler, and Dr. Deborah Lipstadt," says CHES director Mina Cohn.

CHES' workshop, entitled "Inspiring and Empowering Youth Through Holocaust Education", will be delivered by Kenra Mroz, an Ottawa high school teacher and CHES member, and is expected to attract 80 youth delegates and their educators. She will explore the concept of empowerment as it relates to youth, demonstrate how courageous and determined young

people made a significant difference during such next-to-impossible situations as the ghetto uprisings and Jewish resistance in German-occupied Europe, and discuss the strength and bravery of young Jewish couples who married and started families immediately following Liberation.

"My workshop is designed to emphasize the importance and significance of Holocaust education, and why we must continue to study, think about, and discuss the Holocaust, as well as to make clear connections between the material I will be covering and issues that matter to young people (and, indeed, all people) today," says Mroz, who will also focus on legendary Polish-Jewish educator Janusz Korczak, a strong advocate for the empowerment of young people who is remembered as the orphanage director who refused sanctuary for himself and died with his orphans in Treblinka.

A special feature of the workshop will be a CHES-produced video featuring 18-year-old Anne Kazzam, who participated in the 2018 March of the Living and will bring a message encouraging youth's involvement in remembrance.

Membership on the CHES
committee is open to new members.
To support CHES please visit

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