

The Canadian Jewish News



**THE FROZEN
CHOSEN**
hosts of our weekly
podcast *Bonjour Chai*

VS.

**HALLMARK
HANUKKAH**
and other holiday
cultural appropriations

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CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

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Zach Hyman, dreidel parachutes and a car menorah parade mark the 30th anniversary of Edmonton's Hanukkah ceremony

/ Ellin Bessner

When hockey star Zach Hyman left his hometown Toronto Maple Leafs to sign with the Edmonton Oilers earlier this year, he told interviewers he was planning to become a part of the Alberta capital's Jewish community.

And that's how Hyman found himself strapped in to a cherry picker basket of a crane Sunday and lifted to light a giant Hanukkah menorah outside of the Alberta provincial legislature.

Number 18 wasn't alone soaring over the crowd: local Chabad Rabbi Ari Drelich was with him, as the pair carried a Coleman butane lamp which had already been lit below by Jason Kenney, Alberta's premier, to be used for the Shamash candle. Then, as Hyman recited the blessings, in Hebrew, he helped the rabbi install the lamp, and the second one, and lit that flame.

"It was a very cool experience and a big honour to be asked to do that for the Jewish community of Edmonton," Hyman told reporters Monday after the team's practise in Edmonton at Rogers Place. "Obviously I'm Jewish and a proud member of the community."

When asked if he was afraid of being hoisted some nine metres or 30 feet off the ground, and whether he had done similar events in Toronto, Hyman laughed, and said no.

"I don't know if we have anything like that [in Toronto], it was 30 feet tall, maybe higher," he said, with a smile. "They strapped me in pretty good (sic) and safe."

The event was billed as "Chanukah at the Legislature," and the giant menorah was placed at a new location this year next to the Holocaust memorial. Organizers included Chabad of Edmonton, the Edmonton Jewish Federation, the City of Edmonton, and the local National Council of Jewish Women chapter.

Earlier in the afternoon, a parade of 40 cars with large home-made menorahs drove through the city. According to Rabbi Dovid Pinson, they were built in 2019, before COVID, by members of the C-Teen Jewish youth group.

The parade did go ahead last year, after the province banned outdoor gatherings of large groups just a few days before Hanukkah. In 2021, because so much time has passed, some of those teens on the original building crew are now old enough to drive their own cars in the parade.

"They're proud to put their own menorahs on them," Pinson told The CJA.

Community member Cyril Fried has been attending the annual ceremony regularly. He told CBC Edmonton that Hanukkah means family, friends and freedom.

"Everybody enjoys some sense of community and we need it right now, with COVID," said Fried, who grew up in South Africa.

Alberta's premier referenced the obstacles which COVID posed for the Jewish community, with synagogues having to operate with reduced seating capacity to avoid contagion and also to abide by provincial health guidelines.

"We don't know what the future holds, but we do know that we have each other," Kenney told the crowd, adding that although Albertans are resilient people, they don't hold a candle to the Jewish community.

"Ha-Shem knows the Jewish people are the most resilient, I would say in all of history, something that we celebrate today at Hanukkah," he said.

The premier then tried out his best Hebrew pronunciation to send greetings to the crowd.

"Happy Hanukkah, Hag Hanukkah sameack (sic), on behalf of the government of Alberta, God Bless, thank you." ■

Ellin Bessner is the chief correspondent of *The CJA Daily*.

Niagara Falls' Jewish community explores what its future looks like after selling its synagogue

/ Steve Arnold

A small white synagogue building, once the heart of the Niagara Falls Jewish community, sits forlorn and abandoned today.

The families who once worshiped in the little structure decided to sell it last year, finally acknowledging that their dwindling numbers, and rising age, made it almost impossible to keep the structure operating.

Now, the 25 or so families who make up Congregation B'nai Tikvah, a Reform synagogue, are searching for ways to keep their community alive without a physical structure at its heart.

"Is there a future for us without a building? We think so," said Shael Gwartz, recently elected vice-president of the century-old congregation. "Right now, we're open to looking at whatever options might be out there."

Gwartz said the decision to shutter the Ferry Street building came after years of community soul-searching for a way to balance the needs of an old building with the resources of an aging and dwindling congregation.

"Over the last 15 years, the condition of the building has been deteriorating. We've been doing the minimum to keep it water-

tight and heated, but we also have a decreasing membership,” he said. “The original members have passed away and their kids have moved towards Toronto. Not too many have stayed in Niagara, so the size of the community has gone down.”

Over the years, Gwartz said, use of the B’nai Tikvah building declined as membership dropped. Regular services gave way to monthly gatherings which then dwindled to services on High Holy Days and other festivals.

“We looked at the condition of the building at a very basic level and did a rough estimate of what it would cost and concluded the costs of maintaining the building on a go-forward basis were greater than the financial resources we had or were going to have in the future,” he said. “The numbers just didn’t add up.”

When the decision to sell was finally made, the congregation planned to continue meeting in hotel ballrooms and the homes of members. Those plans, however, were knocked off the rails by the pandemic.

“We still have a membership, but all of the activities have been put on hold because of COVID,” Gwartz said.

For High Holy Day services this year B’nai Tikvah members joined the Zoom programs of Hamilton’s Temple Anshe Sholom. Hanukkah plans for this year are uncertain, but the congregation hopes to have a better idea of its future by Pesach in April 2022.

Jewish life in Niagara Falls dates to at least 1918. The original members of the community met in their own homes before buying a house as their meeting space. The Ferry Street building, on the fringe of Niagara Falls’ tourist area, was constructed in 1937 and renovated in the 1950s and 1970s. The latter upgrade included the installation of seven stained glass windows.

Originally known as B’nai Jacob, the congregation became B’nai Tikvah in 1999 after merging with a struggling Reform synagogue in St. Catharines called Temple Tikvah.

Gwartz said the decision to finally vacate the building was an emotional one for long-time members who have fond memories of Hebrew school classes and many simchas in the shul.

The board is aware of the sentimental attachment and has tried to preserve the synagogue’s artifacts and history.

Early ideas included turning the main floor of the building into a museum, with Jewish space in the basement. That was eventually dropped because of the cost.

The current plan is to place six of the seven stained glass windows and the congregation’s memorial plaques into a Holocaust memorial in the Jewish section of a Niagara Falls cemetery.



B’nai Tikvah Synagogue in Niagara Falls, Ont. (Courtesy of Shael Gwartz)

tery. The seventh window is on loan to a local museum.

B’nai Tikvah had four Torah scrolls when the building closed. One has been donated to the Hillel chapter at Western University and the other three, along with 100 years of Niagara Falls Jewish history, remain in secure storage waiting for a decision on the congregation’s future.

The closing of the B’nai Tikvah building leaves Congregation B’nai Israel in St. Catharines and Chabad establishments in Niagara Falls and at Brock University as the only organized Jewish presence in Niagara Region.

B’nai Tikvah’s experience mirrors that of other small congregations and Jewish communities across Canada, said Perry Romberg, manager of regional capacity and programs for the Jewish Federations of Canada-UJA.

According to the 2011 Census data there are 226,610 Jews living in Ontario, with up to 20,000 outside Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, London and Windsor.

While the smallest communities are struggling, the province has been seeing growth in communities like Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Barrie/Simcoe County and Kingston as people are attracted by more reasonable housing prices and job opportunities. ■

Steve Arnold was a longtime *Hamilton Spectator* business reporter who now contributes regularly to The CJN.

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Rabbi Elyse Goldstein says an investigation into sexual harassment at a rabbinic seminary should be a ‘warning shofar blast’ to Jewish organizations everywhere

In the fall of 2019, I was arrested for peacefully sitting on the Burrard Bridge in Vancouver in an action protesting government culpability in the climate and ecological crisis. On Monday evening, Nov. 15, 2021, that same bridge was shut down because of the climate emergency itself.

Earlier this year, the board of governors of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, my rabbinic seminary, retained Morgan Lewis, a leading law firm, to conduct an independent investigation and thoroughly review allegations of past sexual harassment, gender bias, and other forms of inequitable treatment at HUC-JIR.

The report was released earlier this month—and it contained serious and credible allegations of gender and other forms of discrimination and sexual harassment at HUC-JIR, occurring over decades.

There were no secrets: the Jewish Telegraphic Agency picked up the story and soon every major Jewish and secular newspaper was shouting headlines about the misconduct of some of the prominent men who ordained me. Scores of former and current students bravely came forward to give witness to what we women instinctively felt for decades was going on behind closed doors.

If you think this report damns only HUC-JIR, think again.

It should give pause—and a warning shofar blast—to every synagogue, every JCC, every Federation, every Jewish institution where for too long there has been an underlying culture of mansplaining, tolerance of off-colour locker-room men’s talk, behind doors rating of women’s looks, men’s voices overtaking and getting credit for women’s ideas, women being paid less

than men for the same work, women being overlooked for promotions and senior positions. Women being assumed to “want” less responsibility or less religious privilege has been the backdrop of women’s experiences.

Are we so sure of our righteousness that we don’t hear the white noise of sexism which quietly still plays in the background of our own community?

Ask a woman who works in construction, or in a restaurant kitchen, or in the police force or the army, about the men who use their power to subjugate and control. Now ask a female rabbi, professor, doctor or lawyer. Then do not be surprised, but be—with me—disillusioned, disheartened, angry, and sad.

When I arrived in Toronto in 1983, the only female rabbi in this country in those first years, I was blessed to work with Rabbi Dow Marmur, who did not suffer fools lightly and did not tolerate even the slightest suggestion that my rabbinate be viewed as different from his. But still, I paid the price every woman in the 1980s paid for being the only woman in a room full of powerful men. I was ignored and made invisible, teased and questioned about my motivation for being a rabbi, criticized for the same strong opinions a male rabbi would be praised as having, made to present my credentials over and over, condescended to and patronized and called “dear” and “sweetie” too many times to count.

Told to back down and not rush on the feminist stuff. Told to dress down and not be too feminine but also dress up and not be too masculine. I consider myself lucky that only a few male congregants tried to kiss me on the mouth or squeeze my waist on the Oneg Shabbat reception line, or told me how sexy they found it to listen to me or see me on the bimah.

I was an exotic specimen in the ’80s and I accepted that, as all the female rabbis of my class did. I counted on my male colleagues to be my allies and they often were, but equally often they simply did not understand why I was making such a fuss. In the years since, we have all grown wiser and gentler and more aware, and their shared disheartened reactions to the report have heartened me.

I consider myself naive that I didn’t “really” know what these professors were doing, and blessed that none of them ever accosted me. Somehow, I still learned some good Torah from them, though now those lessons leave a bitter taste in my mouth. When I look at my semikhah, I see their signatures on it through tears.

The investigation was done with deep intent to begin a process of vidui (confession), and teshuvah (repentance). That brings me some comfort. I await HUC-JIR’s action plan to manifest that intent, and I’ll welcome the Toronto Jewish community’s soul-searching to put its own house in order as well. ■

Rabbi Elyse Goldstein is the founding rabbi of City Shul in downtown Toronto, and was the first female president of the Toronto Board of Rabbis.

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Rabbi Avi Finegold's hot take for Hanukkah: Maccabees, materialism and the middle path

I'm far from the first person to point out that there's no history or meaning to attach to Hanukkah gifts. They're clearly an idea borrowed from Christmas, and there are dozens of articles to read if you want to go down that rabbit hole.

(Indeed, the very idea of Christians giving Christmas presents is also likely tenuous at best—I just figure it's better to leave Christianity to the Christians.)

But if you decide to be the Hanukkah Grinch (Chrinch? or maybe Grinch but with a nice Hebrew-style ...*chhhhh* at the end?) and not give anything at all, what do you do instead? One possibility is to examine the values that these eight nights represent and how we can create activities that reflect those values.

So, if Hanukkah is about courage, then maybe find a new activity that your family might not otherwise do, or take on an ambitious recipe or project to complete.

Or, if you think that the lights in our windows represent the Jews being a light to the nations, then maybe make this light more than symbolic. Head into the street and find an opportunity to give back to those that are less fortunate. Don't just light up your neighbourhood from the comfort of your home. Go and bring food and supplies to a homeless shelter and light up the lives of others.

That's all well and good and I hope that even if you are a gift-giving family, you do this, too. I'd just like to go one step further and reflect on a lesser-known aspect of the original story:

Much of the popular understanding of Hanukkah centres around the Hellenization of the Jews in the second century BCE and the resistance that was mounted against this by the Maccabees. And while it's well documented, one critical aspect of this resistance isn't much discussed—but I think it's at the heart of what this holiday means.

Antiochus, the Seleucid Greek King who was leading the military campaign against the Jews, clearly understood the dictum to know your enemy (indeed Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* predates this time period by a good few centuries, but this too is a matter for another time). One of his main strategies was to attack on when Jews wouldn't fight because they didn't want to violate Shabbat restrictions. As one would imagine, this was disastrous, and Mattathias is recorded in the *Book of the Maccabees* as endorsing the position of allowing one to fight on the Sabbath in order to preserve a life.

While this position was the one taken up by the Pharisees and eventually the rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud, this was certainly not the prevailing opinion at the time. Yet it allowed the Jews to prevail over the Greeks and recapture and rededicate the Temple. We celebrate this victory every year.

Assimilation has clearly been on our minds since then, and the options have only gotten more complex.

Are gifts on Hanukkah a capitulation to those forces? What about the Mensch on the Bench? Should one shut out every possible influence that society presents as a bulwark against assimilation? Perhaps we need to consider the original story to help us move forward.

There were clearly Jews who assimilated completely and who knows what happened to them in the long run. There were also Jews who saw that and went in the opposite direction and refused to violate their laws and died as a result.

Maccabees saw a different path. They lived a faith that was worth preserving and worth living for, but to do that they had to be flexible and take an unpopular opinion, and in a way be influenced by the military tactics of Antiochus and the Hellenists.

Perhaps the message of Hanukkah, then, is to examine our place in greater society and ask ourselves what parts are we rejecting for good reason (the Maccabees were still fiercely committed to Jewish practice, after all), what we are blindly rejecting even though it might be killing us... and what the middle path might be.

The best part of living in our age is that we all get to make our own choices about what path to take. And for some, personal rewards to remind ourselves that this is a joyous time might not be such a terrible thing.

And yet, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that the story doesn't really end there. The Hasmonean dynasty ended up corrupt and in league with Rome, leading directly to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the very Temple that was rededicated two centuries earlier.

I don't give Hanukkah gifts—don't worry, my wife does, so the kids are happy—but do I think that this act is going to save the Jews? No. Will presents prevent intermarriage? Who knows? Everyone's middle path is different and it might take 200 more years to know what was the right thing to do.

In the meantime, I'm going to work some magic in the kitchen, producing latkes that are shatteringly crisp on the outside and creamy on the inside.

(Pro tip: only use the egg yolks—leave the whites for making whiskey sours.) ■

Ilana Zackon's worst Hallmark Hanukkah movie script pitch

Growing up in a Jewish bubble of schools, camps, youth groups—the whole *megillah*, so to speak—I never really knew anyone who *didn't* celebrate Hanukkah until I was about 16.

Our street in Dollard-des-Ormeaux was almost entirely populated by Jews, save for one family. And, to this day, we're still wondering what enticed them to live there.

One of the other houses had a Hanukkah bush, which my family thought was both hilarious and slightly offensive.

So, despite not having any friends of my own who celebrated Christmas, I was still very aware of it. I mean, how could you not be? Have you been to a grocery store at this time of year? "Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town" plays through every walk down the aisles and while waiting in line, even in the neighbourhoods where they don't sell too many seasonal hams.

As if you need to be reminded of this at the dawn of December.

That's what struck me as so hilarious when discussing the phenomena of the token Jewish characters in these recent Hallmark Hanukkah-slash-Christmas movies made for the greeting card company's American channel—although many of them are filmed in Canada, and air here on the W Network.

These seem like a progression from the "Chrismukkah" concept popularized in 2003 on the show *The O.C.* But this year's Hallmark offering, *Eight Gifts of Hanukkah*, is considered a cultural breakthrough for featuring two fully Jewish main characters, played by Israeli actress Inbar Lavi and Toronto's own Degrassi legend Jake Epstein.

Jewish leads in these prior films (which have also been produced for a rival network, Lifetime) often know none of the words to Christmas songs, can't seem to make a gingerbread

house—because we're presumably terrible at learning how to do new things—and don't seem to know a single thing about the Claus-themed holiday.

However, in the world of Hallmark, it's something these romance-loving characters "always wanted to do!" (Read in an overly cheerful voice for full effect.)

Admittedly, it was only when I dated a non-Jew that I really truly understood how much the wild commercialism of this pagan-turned-Coca-Cola-infused holiday corrupted modern-day North America. It's something you can't entirely grasp from watching TV.

While others were buying copious amounts of Christmas presents, and emptying their bank accounts in the name of holiday cheer, I was silently laughing at how ridiculous it all was. You can probably guess what happened next.

Reader, I had to become part of it myself.

As a sort of compromise, my ex-boyfriend and I celebrated each other's holidays, as every good interfaith couple should. (Right? I'm seeking retroactive validation, people.)

Suddenly, I found myself at the mall in the weeks leading up to Xmas, anxiously hunting for the perfect gifts.

"How is your Christmas shopping going?" had previously been a question I had always bluntly answered with, "I don't celebrate."

Now, the response that came out of my mouth was, "Ugh! I'm almost done."

And when someone would exclaim something like, "Gearing up for the holidays is so stressful!" I was suddenly replying with a simpatico nod: "I know, right?"

(Not gonna lie, receiving a bunch of presents from my ex's family was kind of nice. I couldn't quite get into the decorating part, though.)

The thing is, I was extremely hyperaware that I wasn't supposed to be doing the things I was doing. I could feel my hypothetical future generations assimilating with every accumulative "Ho ho ho!"

Plus, I felt uncomfortable doing it, something that expressed itself passive aggressively at times. No, I don't want to string up lights or decorate your tree. (Can you tell why we broke up?)

All of this to say, if real life was like a Hallmark Hanukkah movie, I'd have been the worst possible protagonist.

"Look who I brought home for the holidays!" my perfect-looking goyishe greeting-card stud would exclaim to his equally beatific parents and siblings. "The Christmas Grinch! Not only does she have zero interest in helping us celebrate this holiday which she doesn't connect to in any way, but she's Jewish!"

"And I do know all the words to your silly jingly songs," I'd snarkily respond. "Most of them were written by Jews like me."

The family would sit there, their mouths agape, just waiting for me to patiently leave so they could get back to their holiday cheer.

Maybe this is why I have no interest in contributing to the Hallmark franchise—and I'm a Canadian actress who can use the work.

Out of curiosity, I once asked one of my agents if she ever submitted me for these roles (full disclosure: at that point I'd never had a Hallmark audition before, but I've had a few since then) to which she sincerely replied: "Ilana, I think you have too much depth."

It's possibly the greatest professional compliment I've ever received.

And yes, I've attended many parties flecked with the symbolism of Christmas. I've participated in more Secret Santas than I'm comfortable disclosing. (I just recently learned about the Jewish version, Mysterious Maccabee, oy vey.) I've even worn ugly Christmas sweaters. (It was to conform to a heavily enforced dress code, I swear!)

But it was ultimately hard for me to feel like I was adding to the disappearance of my own culture and history.

My ex didn't want to blend our holidays. As a result, there were no Jewish baubles on the tree (fine by me), we had no Hanukkah decorations near the Santa ones (this was questionable), and he expected distinct celebrations for each.

It all left me feeling pretty suppressed.

I felt a strong need to drown out his never-ending Christmas playlist with Hanukkah songs, and then realized how juvenile they sounded next to crooners like Frank Sinatra, no matter how hard some artists have tried to update ditties like "Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel."

On my last Chrismukkah in the relationship, the winter before COVID came to town, the two of us were in Switzerland. We hit up every Christmas market in our midst.

Luckily, his brother who lives there was kind enough to suggest we pay attention to Hanukkah, which was starting after sundown.

That first evening, we lit a scented candle the brother's girlfriend bought, and made a Swiss rendition of latkes: rosti separated into little clumps. I was touched, but felt wildly isolated singing the Hebrew prayers before the Christmas music came back on.

Forget about eight crazy nights—because this celebration didn't make it to the end of one.

Let's be honest. No producer is going to make a Hallmark movie about an experience like the one I had.

But a holiday celebrating how the Jews overcame assimilation needs stories like these, too. ■

David Sklar rates three Hanukkah movies out of five sufganiyot

Holiday Date

(Hallmark 2019, filmed in Fort Langley, B.C.)

After a woman's boyfriend breaks up with her right before the holidays, she agrees to go home with an actor who will pose as her significant other instead. Matt Cohen plays Joel Parker, Brittany Bristow plays Brooke Miller—and her dad is played by the once-famous *Tron* actor Bruce Boxleitner.

This is the first one out of the gate for Hallmark with a Jewish

lens. Not the best, as the only thing really Jewy thing here is how hard the male lead tries to cover up his incompetence when decking the halls with boughs of holly. (Wait, what exactly is a bough of holly?)



Mistletoe and Menorahs

(Lifetime 2019, filmed in Ottawa)

Opposites attract? In this version, a toy company executive named Christy Dickinson (Kelley Jakle) meets a match named Jonathan Silver (Jake Epstein) when she needs to learn the ABCs—or rather, the Aleph Bet Vets—of Hanukkah to land a *yuge* account. Can a girl raised on Christmas surrender her heart and stomach to sufganiyot?

This had everything you could desire in a holiday treat. Jews sporting blue and white clothes, Christians decked out in green and red and then a last minute clothing swap adds up to full integration and, for that matter, Peace on Earth. Oh, and don't forget a cameo for Theresa Tova, as the proprietor of the hippest Judaica store anywhere, Little Mitzvah.



Love, Lights, Hanukkah!

(Hallmark 2020, filmed in Vancouver)

Christina—all the leads seem to have very goyish names—played by Mia Kirshner, is preparing her restaurant for the busiest time of the year when she gets a surprise: a DNA test revealing she's half-Jewish. This discovery leads her on a journey to discover a new family and forge a romantic relationship over eight crazy nights.

Now we're getting somewhere. I was very excited to see Ben Savage from my own boyhood sitcom *Boy Meets World* back in action. Mix in DNA, a dash of family reunification, and oodles of pasta. What's not to love? This will become a classic in no time.



Avi Finegold, Ilana Zackon and David Sklar host The CJN's weekly podcast *Bonjour Chai*.

Mark Hebscher on why Lou Marsh's name must be removed from Canada's top athletic award right now

My grandfather once told me he would never buy the *Toronto Star* because it had an anti-Israel bias, and a history of racism. He explained how a guy named Lou Marsh—a sportswriter who also became the newspaper's sports editor for the last five years of his life—regularly put down minorities in his widely read columns.

Marsh was opposed to a boycott of the 1936 Berlin Olympics because he felt that the whole matter of Nazi antisemitism was an internal matter for Germans, and of no concern to Canada. He called the mistreatment of Jewish people “overblown.”

And yet, during this time, *Star* correspondent Matthew Halton reported on how Germans were persecuting Jews and taking away their basic human rights. Lou Marsh was opposed to a boycott, even though other prominent sportswriters didn't want Canada sending a team to help Hitler's propaganda machine.

Several athletes from around the world did boycott the Games in protest of the Nazis. Two of them were Jewish Canadians: boxers Sammy Luftspring (who Marsh had once called “an aggressive Jew boy”) and Norman “Baby Yack” Yakubowitz opted to go to Barcelona for the People's Olympiad. (The event was cancelled on the morning of the opening ceremonies because of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.)

Even though Marsh died at age 57 in March 1936, five months before the Olympics transpired that year, few people were aware of his racist musings—and even fewer paid attention as the years went on.

But now, something must be done about the name that adorns the award given to the top athlete in Canada every year by the *Toronto Star*.

The call to change the trophy's name has gotten much louder in November 2021, thanks to TSN broadcaster Gord Miller:

As part of a recent thread of tweets, Miller highlighted a piece from Western University professor Janice Forsyth about how Marsh wrote terrible things about minorities.

In light of this information, perhaps we should seriously think about naming the trophy after someone else.

It would be the right thing to do.

I've also suggested dropping the name for many years—in print and on my podcast. But, because Gord Miller has over 250,000 social media followers, the hundreds of incensed replies further confirmed how Lou Marsh's backstory remains obscure to most.

Marsh was an excellent amateur athlete in his day. Later, he became a famous sportswriter, who often moonlighted as a boxing, football and hockey referee. He also had a very cozy relationship with the Canadian Olympic Committee, and it wasn't uncommon for such men to receive “favourable treatment” by these organizations in return for some publicity in his column.

He even helped train the great indigenous runner and 1908 Boston Marathon winner Tom Longboat, who he had a love-hate relationship with. Because even when Longboat won, Marsh would somehow find a way to congratulate his trainers, rather than the runner himself. Marsh would often mention Longboat by name once or twice in his stories—then used “The Indian” or “The Onandaga” or “Heap Big Indian” when referring to him during the rest of the article.

I feel it's necessary to discuss context here. A century ago, racism and antisemitism were often perpetuated by popular writers, like Lou Marsh. His constant use of racial stereotyping went a long way in negatively influencing his many readers that minorities were subhuman, not worthy of respect, and OK to be ridiculed.

Marsh wrote a great deal about Longboat and his many marathon battles. One came against the Italian Dorando Pietri, whom Marsh had once described as “an olive-hued macaroni eater.”

In a *Star* report published on Jan. 4, 1909, Marsh wrote this to describe Longboat about to overtake Dorando late in the race:

“The imperturbable Indian was right there, and smiling like a coon in a watermelon patch. The melon was ripe for picking.”

The sportswriter could be a nasty name-caller as well.

“I saw Mrs. Longboat today,” he wrote after the race. “She is as fat as butter.”

And after Longboat refused to follow the training methods set out by his manager, Marsh wrote this on Jan. 13, 1909: “Longboat must be handled, not treated.”

Two days later: “Chances are that Longboat will wind up in a circus.”

This was a constant theme in Marsh's columns. Longboat was treated more like a racehorse or a circus animal than a human being: “The original dummy, wily, unpredictable, as hard to train as a leopard.” (He never wrote about a white athlete in those terms.)

Because it's been 85 years since Marsh died, and the *Toronto Star* immediately put his name on a trophy given to the best athlete in Canada, he's become synonymous with athletic excellence, and therefore revered. But the facts are overwhelming.

Marsh doesn't deserve to have his name on such a prestigious award. Not after the way he mistreated people in print all those years, and led many to believe that intolerance and bigotry were alright, as long as it helped sell newspapers.

My suggestion is simple enough. Call it the Terry Fox Trophy.

And that way, we'll be reminded of a courageous, uplifting, extremely Canadian athlete—rather than a narrow-minded bigot who was constantly putting people down. ■



Mark Hebscher is the host of the podcast *Hebsy on Sports*.