

# The Canadian Jewish News



**RONEN HOFFMAN**  
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# Why is every Holocaust museum in Canada undergoing a massive overhaul right now?

/ Lila Sarick

Every Holocaust museum across Canada is currently in the middle of extensive rebuilding or renovation projects this winter. In all cases, the work is spurred by two sobering trends: aging survivors and an escalation of antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

The generation of survivors, whose powerful testimony was once the centrepiece of museum visits, is fading. And even those who were keen to continue speaking with schoolchildren have seen their visits curtailed by COVID-19.

Dara Solomon, executive director of the Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre in Toronto, said her roster of 50 to 60 Holocaust survivors has dwindled to just a few who are still able to come and share their personal stories with students.

At the same time, Holocaust distortion has become widespread and pervasive. The idea that rabid anti-vaxxers would liken mask mandates and vaccine passports to the yellow stars Jews were forced to wear in Nazi-occupied Europe would have been unthinkable in pre-pandemic times.

“We need to teach our community to be able to identify when they’re seeing Holocaust myths and distortion, as well as teach the teachers how to teach that. You see things in classrooms where, unfortunately, students are not getting the strongest understanding in Holocaust education,” Solomon said.

“We have to protect the facts. We have to be a space where this is the definitive history of the Holocaust.”

Survivors were the driving force behind the construction of Holocaust centres and museums, as they sought to preserve and explain their experiences to the larger community. Today, museums stand in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver, all within Jewish communal buildings.

Currently, every museum is planning a renovation or undertaking an entire rebuild. Montreal’s project is the most ambitious, with the purchase of a new site close to other museums and in what was a traditional Jewish immigrant neighbourhood. Toronto is rebuilding in a new Jewish community centre near where it has always been located. Winnipeg is overhauling its current exhibits, while Vancouver is poised to make big changes as its Jewish community centre goes through a major expansion.

## In Toronto, modern media fills the generation gap

In Toronto, museum designers started the redesign process (pre-COVID) by tagging along with a school group that visited the museum and heard a survivor speak.

In a webinar produced for Holocaust Education Week, Emilio

Genovese, senior exhibition designer at Reich + Petch Design International, said they realized a Holocaust centre is different than a typical museum or gallery.

“It’s a collecting museum, but it’s not collecting tangible objects—it collects stories. And these stories are unique thumbprints that can never be excavated or discovered ever again,” he said.

Tony Reich, senior architect at Reich + Petch, pondered the same problem. “The presentation by survivors had an incredible impact on the children. You could actually hear a pin drop in the room. We thought, ‘How can we replicate this when survivors are not with us?’”

He added, “The goals were to make the stories come alive in the same way as they do when a face-to-face person is presenting. We realized this is going to require the most up-to-date and effective media we can possibly provide in the centre.”

In Toronto’s museum, scheduled to open spring 2023, the answer lies in modern technology. Visitors will start by watching a film that details the richness of European Jewish life before the war and sets the stage for the horrors of the Nazi era.

In the galleries, 75-inch monitors, as tall as an adult, will feature survivors telling their stories.

Toronto has “an embarrassment of riches” when it comes to recorded survivor testimony, Solomon said. The museum, like others across Canada, has been recording survivors for years and recently finished a film shoot that will be part of the introductory movie. Steven Spielberg’s USC Shoah Foundation, founded to record survivors’ stories, has testimony from about 1,500 Canadians as well.

Some artifacts, especially those with a particularly compelling story, will also be on display. A Torah that was thrown out of a burning synagogue on Kristallnacht, rescued by a priest who gave it to the late Rabbi Gunther Plaut, will have a prominent place in the gallery.

The new museum also picks up where the old one left off, telling the story of liberation and the lives survivors rebuilt in Toronto. Guided visits will conclude in a library, where school groups and others can discuss contemporary antisemitism and other forms of hate and the relevance to their own lives.

The project is expected to cost around \$27.5 million. Of that, \$15 million is budgeted for an endowment to sustain the museum and the technology, while \$12.5 million is for building costs. The Azrieli Foundation has pledged \$12 million for the project.

## Grappling with Winnipeg’s fascist past

In Winnipeg, the budget is considerably smaller, but the need to refresh the gallery is just as great. Belle Jarniewski, executive director of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, estimates it will cost about \$200,000 to update their Holocaust Education Centre, which offers teacher training and tours for school groups.

The overhaul will allow the centre to modernize its exhibits. For example, older displays use the word “gypsy”, now seen as a pejorative term by the Roma community. Jarniewski also wants to display more artifacts, all of which have been donated by Winnipeg residents, and focus on survivors’ resilience.

She also wants to draw attention to the antisemitism of the 1930s and ’40s in Canada. The centre has an extensive digitized

collection of newspapers, including original copies of the Canadian Nationalist, a pro-Nazi, pro-fascist paper from that era.

“Here in Manitoba, fascism was very popular. Those are really fascinating pieces,” she said. “I don’t think in Canada we have reckoned with our history of antisemitism quite yet. I think we try and ignore it.”

The museum is also grappling with the loss of several active Holocaust survivors. Two of its remaining speakers are over 95, while a couple have said that as they grow older, the emotional cost of recalling their experiences had become too great for them to continue, she said.

Jarniewski, the daughter of two Holocaust survivors, now gives presentations that incorporate her own parents’ experiences, and she has found a few other survivors’ children willing to join her.

She also intends to add an interactive table to the museum, where maps and recorded survivor testimony would be available at the touch of a button. A similar device is being used at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, in Winnipeg, where Jarniewski has seen how popular it is.

### **An \$80-million migration in Montreal**

On the other end of the spectrum is Montreal, where an entire museum is being built from the ground up. The new building, unlike its predecessor, will not be located on a campus with other Jewish communal buildings, but instead downtown, near Montreal’s other museums and close to what were Jewish immigrant neighbourhoods.

The museum has long since outgrown its home in a Federation building, where there was no room for classrooms or temporary exhibitions, said Sarah Fogg, head of communications for the Montreal Holocaust Museum.

An international competition to design the new building has just been launched, so it’s too early to know exactly what form the galleries will take, but the new building is slated to have research facilities, an educational wing and a memorial garden.

The 45,000-sq-ft museum, opening 2025, will cost about \$80 million, which includes a \$15-million endowment. The Azrieli Foundation has pledged \$15 million for the project and the provincial government has indicated it will provide funding as well, Fogg said.

The new building promises to be a “game-changer,” with 100,000 visits forecast per year, up from the 20,000 annual visits the current site saw pre-pandemic.

“It’s an awesome opportunity to make something that’s so significant in terms of Holocaust education and remembrance and the legacy of human rights from the Holocaust, but also to create something that’s unique in Montreal and to contribute to Montreal’s leadership and architecture,” Fogg said.

Modern technology will be incorporated to preserve survivors’ testimony. While survivors have met virtually with school groups during the pandemic, and hopefully will meet again in person, Fogg said, the museum also has 850 recorded testimonies.

The new site will also feature Dimensions in Testimony, a project by the USC Shoah Foundation that lets people pose questions that prompt real-time responses from pre-recorded video interviews of survivors. The first one to be filmed in French, in partnership with the USC Shoah Foundation and the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, will be hosted at the Montreal museum.

### **Vancouver focusing on humanity “in times of moral crisis”**

Planning is still in the early stages for the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, which is poised to move into a new space, as the Jewish community campus, where it is currently located, redevelops and expands. But a formal announcement has not been made yet, said executive director Nina Krieger.

The VHEC, like the Canada’s other Holocaust centres, is racing to collect not just testimonies of survivors, but also documents, artifacts, photographs and other primary sources that tell the story of the Shoah.

An expanded gallery will not only allow the Vancouver museum to display more of its growing collection, but also provide a space to discuss larger ideas, Krieger said, such as the dangers of propaganda and the role bystanders play in society.

“These fundamental questions about human behaviour in times of moral crisis that emerge from studying the Holocaust, they are so relevant considering how we act or don’t act in response to present-day social justice issues,” Krieger added.

Demand for anti-racism and anti-hate education, through the lens of the Holocaust, has grown tremendously. Before COVID, between 2018 and 2019, visits to the VHEC increased by 50 per cent. The centre engages with about 25,000 students a year, both in the museum and in classroom visits.

“We’ve also seen, as all the other centres have, an increase in the relevance of our missions, which fundamentally speak to the dangers of antisemitism, racism and hate unchecked,” Krieger said.

“Global trends and trends in our own backyard have made our work more relevant than ever.” ■

Lila Sarick is the news editor of The CJN.

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## **What happens when our spiritual leaders betray us?**

/ Rabbi Daniel Korobkin

*Chaim Walder was an Israeli haredi rabbi and best-selling author of books for children. In November 2021, an investigative piece by Haaretz reported that several women alleged that Walder sexually assaulted them while they were under his care as a therapist. The Safed Rabbinical Court found that over a period of 25 years, Walder had sexually abused women, girls, and boys that had come to him for treatment. Walder died by suicide Dec. 27, 2021.*

*Rabbi Daniel Korobkin spoke about the Walder case at Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation in Thornhill, Ont. This is an edited version of that sermon:*

**T**he world is facing a lot of cognitive dissonance right now. The term as used today refers to a psychological tension that exists when a person's beliefs are one way, but the facts on the ground contradict those beliefs. The pandemic has proven to us that contrary to what we previously believed—that we control our destinies and can reliably plan our futures—in reality, we aren't in control of our destinies at all.

Cognitive dissonance has also repeatedly stricken those of us who are deeply committed Jews. We have been raised our entire lives with the conviction that one who lives a committed religious life will live a life of honour, virtue, and integrity. The Torah is meant to have a transformative effect upon the Jew who embraces its precepts. Alas, we've seen too many times over the years that devoutly observant Jews have been in the headlines for committing serious crimes, which indicates that the Torah has not had the effect that we would have expected.

Whether it's white-collar crimes or exploitation and abuse of others, the fact is that even the most Orthodox-looking Jews are subject to failure. And, a devoutly Orthodox Jew exposed as an abuser is shocking and provocative in the same way that a "man bites dog" story is, and is sure to garner headlines.

I clearly remember one of my earliest experiences of cognitive dissonance. I was a *yeshivah bochur*, not more than 19 years old, in a Baltimore yeshivah. A number of my friends had studied in a very popular and "cool" yeshivah in Israel before coming back to learn in the States. One day we learned that the head of that yeshivah had been sexually abusing some of the students. I was shocked, because this rosh yeshivah was a "rock star" in our world: a charismatic figure who was known to draw in even the most toughened and Yiddishkeit-averse young men, and he would ignite their souls.

I had trouble processing this: How does a man who stands for Torah commit the most loathsome acts? How could he exploit the very students whose souls had been entrusted to him? My only solace was noting that one of the alumni of that yeshivah chose to react to the betrayal by doubling down on his *hasmadah*, his incessant Torah study in the *beit midrash* (study hall). If that worked for him, how could it not work for me, who was not directly betrayed by this rabbi?

Over the years, I've learned how to reconcile the conflict, and at least have coping mechanisms to deal with the tension.

When looking at how Pharaoh and the Egyptians reacted to the plagues, they were faced with a huge amount of cognitive dissonance. Their strongly held convictions were that (Ezek. 29:3) "The Nile is mine and I am self-made."

The Egyptians believed in their own autonomy and that they controlled the world around them. The plagues were a harsh splash of cold water. How could Pharaoh resolve this cognitive dissonance? He could have freed the Jews, resolving his cognitive dissonance by admitting that he really wasn't the great controller he had originally thought himself to be. Due to his hubris, though, that wasn't an option.

Instead, Scripture notes that he vacillated between "hardening" his heart and making his heart "heavy." "Hardening" his heart meant convincing himself that the plagues weren't really from God but were instead a trick or coincidence. Making his heart "heavy" meant minimizing the impact of the plagues and blocking it out of his conscious thoughts. Both were methods

that we're all familiar with when we wish to be in denial about the severity of a situation that we'd rather avoid.

How did I resolve my own cognitive dissonance? No, it was not through denial or simply giving up. Rather, I had to let go of long-held belief: The belief that all Jews are automatically transformed by the Torah. I eventually came to the reconciliation that while this was a goal, it was far from easy for any person to accomplish it fully. In fact, many times people come across as very religious, specifically because they recognize that they have demons within that have not been fully excised, and they seek to compensate for that by "talking the talk," even when they can't fully "walk the walk."

This is a lesson that a 19-year-old *yeshivah bochur* was capable of processing. Can a 7- or 8-year-old boy or girl, learning about the horrific crimes of Chaim Walder—their hero and favorite author who has been implicated in the media as a child molester and rapist, and who then died by suicide—process their cognitive dissonance in the same way? I really don't know. I cannot tell you how disturbing this whole mess is for so many of us, myself included.

My children grew up with Walder's books. There is no question that he was a gifted writer, and had tremendous sensitivity and the ability to connect with children, with deep empathy and understanding. But sometimes, those are precisely the people who can become child predators. Because of their greater understanding of children, they know exactly how to appeal to them and manipulate them.

Despite my concerns and misgivings about how to communicate this with our younger children, I feel we have no choice. If your child was a reader of Walder's books, I think it's important to sit down with them, and have an open conversation about the difference between *frumkeit* (religious observance) and fully embracing the Torah. Let them know that just because a person may look very religious, and even if that person is a religious leader within the Torah world, this does not mean that they are infallible.

People rise to greatness not because they're *tzadikim* (righteous), for after all, only Hashem knows who is truly a *tzadik* and who is not. Rather, people rise to leadership positions because of their charisma, their popularity, and their ability to communicate effectively a message that is beneficial for the Torah community.

Most of the time, leaders of the Torah world turn out to be *tzadikim* in retrospect, but not always. Because we don't know what people are thinking or doing behind closed doors, we can't assume that everyone is a *tzadik*. We need to exercise the Talmudic maxim of "*Kabdehu v'Chashdehu*," respect him but suspect him.

Remind your children that even a very respected teacher or rabbi is assumed to be a good person, but everyone is still a human being. Most importantly, make sure they know how to take the proper precautions about being alone with an adult.

This means that we have to actively dismantle some of our children's innocence. As much as it pains us to remove some of the aura from our children's religious heroes, it's an unfortunate necessity in today's tragically turbulent world.

Finally, despite the great benefit that these books may have had in the past, I'm personally disposing of my Chaim Walder

books and encourage you to do the same. This is for two reasons. Firstly, our Sages tell us (TB Gittin 45b) that if a heretic or idolater writes a *sefer Torah*, that text must be burned. Why is that? Isn't it the same holy text as a regular *sefer Torah*?

Rashi explains that we must assume that the person wrote the *sefer Torah* with apostasy or idolatry in mind. That is, there is a remnant of impurity in the words themselves, even though the words are completely disconnected from the author and are not even the author's original words. I feel that the same applies to literature that was written by a criminal who is responsible for so many shattered lives.

But perhaps more importantly, I'm concerned about the welfare of Walder's victims. As I'm writing this, the media have just reported that one of his victims took her own life. Having these books on the bookshelves of our homes and our libraries is a glaring "seal of approval" of his books and, by extension, him as a person. The pain that a victim must have just by seeing his work being propagated is not something that I feel that any of us should be a party to.

There's more to say, but sometimes silence is best. I pray for comfort and healing to Walder's victims and to the innocent members of his family, all of whom must be suffering greatly. May Hashem heal our cognitive dissonance and wipe the tears off all our faces. ■

**Rabbi Daniel Korobkin is the senior rabbi at Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation in Thornhill, Ont.**

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## Meet Ronen Hoffman, Israel's new ambassador to Canada

/ Ellin Bessner

Israel's new ambassador to Canada is a hockey dad. Plus, he wants to fight terrorism and antisemitism, strengthen research and development projects between the two countries, and forge ties with Canada's Indigenous people.

He also needs to remember to wear his winter coat when he leaves for work.

Ronen Hoffman, 58, arrived in Ottawa in the week of Hanukkah to take up his new duties.

The diplomatic post has been vacant for two years, since Nimrod Barkan stepped down in November of 2019. But with the instability in Israeli politics until Naftali Bennett's government took office in summer 2021, and the COVID pandemic hampering international travel, Hoffman wasn't able to arrive until just a few weeks ago.

Hoffman was born to a farming family in Afula, in the Jezreel Valley. He hasn't been to Canada since he was in his 20s, when he travelled after the army while working as a *shaliach* (emis-

sary) to a Jewish summer camp in Atlanta, Georgia. Hoffman was an aide to former Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, and was on the team negotiating the unsuccessful peace talks with Syria.

After earning his doctorate in 1999, he was elected to the Knesset in 2013 as a member of Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid party. He did a stint as co-chair of the Israel-Canada Parliamentary Friendship group. This is his first posting as an ambassador. He is a father of three. His partner is a scientist at the Weizmann Institute.

On Hoffman's first Christmas in wintry Ottawa, he made a TikTok video showing him walking through Lansdowne Park trying out his snowball throwing technique, and doing some tobogganing. (He didn't wear winter boots, though.)

Hoffman sat down with *The CJN Daily's* Ellin Bessner to outline his mandate and his hockey dad chops.

**Q. Describe what it was like when you presented your credentials to Canada's first Indigenous governor general, Mary Simon, on Dec. 7, 2021.**

**A.** Well, I have to say that it was a very moving and wonderful ceremony. I came there with my family, which is here with me—my partner and my four-year-old son, Tomer, and my team from the embassy. There were three other ambassadors that also presented: the ambassadors of the United States, Spain and Sri Lanka. It was an opportunity for us to get a little bond together and speak to each other. And, of course, meeting the governor general and her spouse and the people. And I'm very happy that we had an opportunity to really do it, not through Zoom or through the internet, but really do it there, face to face.

**Q. Did you wear or bring or do anything that meant something meaningful to you?**

**A.** Yes. Can you see the little lapel pin on my jacket? Can you see these Canada and Israeli flags here? So around it, we have an orange pin, in solidarity with the Indigenous people, also. It was just a little gesture, and I feel that's part of what I'm going to do here. I would like to educate myself more on the First Nations communities here. I feel that there is a common ground for us to stand on, all of us, as the Jewish people, who for us the State of Israel is, in essence, a return of the Jewish people to our indigenous homeland and traditions and culture. My goal is to build bridges of dialogue, cooperation, collaboration with communities, and we really wanted to show that we care.

**Q. Would you say that you're planning to reach out to the Assembly of First Nations and all the Indigenous groups, including in Saskatchewan, as well, to try to meet them?**

**A.** Absolutely. I'm the Israeli ambassador to Canada, not only to Ottawa and not only to a specific province. It's a big and wonderful and beautiful country with lovely people. And so, of course, I intend to travel throughout the country and meet as many people as I can and community members and head of communities. It would be an important part of what I'm going to do here.

### Fighting antisemitism in Canada

**Q. Let's move on a little bit towards your agenda. You're coming to Canada seven months after the war between**

**Hamas and Israel, where Canada's Jewish community experienced an unprecedented level of antisemitism not seen since the Second World War. First of all, were you surprised when you heard about what the Canadian Jewish community was feeling? And what is your mandate to deal with this here in Canada?**

**A.** I can't say that I was surprised because before I became an ambassador, I've been a lecturer. And as a lecturer, I met with many delegations from the Jewish communities of North America, including Canada, who came to Israel. And I heard a lot before the conflict in May about challenges and opportunities of the Jewish communities here, vis-a-vis other communities and vis-a-vis other minorities and governments. I'm aware of the antisemitism and I agree with you that the wave around the conflict in May has been a tremendous one, one that has been very significant when you compare it to previous waves.

I think that as Israeli diplomats, my role as an Israeli ambassador to Canada is to help and to coordinate, to cooperate and to join forces in the combat of antisemitism and anti-Zionism and anti-Israel. They're all connected to each other. Sometimes, some of the people would say, 'Oh, some of these activists just want to show some criticism towards the government of Israel.' It's not that. It's much deeper than that. Maybe now it's not hidden anymore. They're actually against the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. This is antisemitism. And I think that the Jewish communities here in Canada are not alone in facing this threat and challenge: the Israelis, your brothers and sisters and families, we all face the same kind of challenge in this respect. So of course, part of my mandate is to work hand in hand with the leaders of the Jewish communities here, and try to find ways to combat it together.

**Q. It's a big part of your mandate. But it wasn't number one on the list. Your number one priority for your mandate is?**

**A.** It is to strengthen the relationship between Israel and Canada, which are very close relations, a very close friendship, and we have shared and we still share common values and common interests. And like Canada, Israel is committed to human rights, to justice, to the rule of law. We are liberal democracies. We also have shared interests, for example, to combat terrorism, global terrorism, to help to create more stability in our areas, in our regions and to work together vis-a-vis opportunities and challenges. That is, I would say, my number one goal here: to continue and to strengthen those bilateral relations and close friendship that Israel has with Canada.

**Q. What concerns does the Israeli government have about Canada's decision during the May hostilities with Hamas to give money—about \$25 million—to agencies such as UNRWA that have had a very problematic history when it comes to anti-Zionist and anti-Israel and Jew hatred materials? How does Israel feel about that?**

**A.** We face some organizations, international and Palestinian organizations, that call themselves organizations that care for human rights, and they kind of hide behind that high language and terms that we are all committed to. But actually, they are terror organizations. Our concern is that our friends around the world, including Canada, would be with us, looking at those organizations, exposing the lies and getting to see exactly what they're doing. And this is a concern in our mis-

sion and a real objective as part of our diplomatic work.

**Q. So back to your mandate and what you're here for. In a news release when you presented your credentials to the governor general, you said that you want to help with startups, and harness Israeli know-how to help Canada solve problems. Is there any area in particular that you want to focus on? We just finished re-upping the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, which was re-signed under a previous Trudeau government. What more is there to do?**

**A.** There's a lot to do. Look, Israel and Canada are closely working on finalizing a research and development agreement, to mutually invest in know-how in joint research projects, and innovation in several fields, such as food tech, health tech, environment, energy and climate security. And then, of course, letting startups and the industrial ecosystem get to know each other and to develop ties and relations. So we're working on it. And I'm optimistic here. I think that we would really enlarge our relationship and find and create more joint projects on innovation. This is, again, one of the first high priorities on my agenda.

**Q. Would you say that there's a date when they are expecting to sign it? In 2022 or 2023?**

**A.** There is no specific date. But as an ambassador, I'm going to push and I'm going to try to do it as soon as possible. And it's just one specific agreement. And I have some ideas for other agreements as well to start MOUs. Every agreement or project starts with dialogue, right? So, my idea is to create more dialogue between government to government, meaning some of the ministries in Israel that are relevant to innovation, hopefully, would speak in a structured dialogue process to some of the ministries here in Canada, for example, the ministries of energy and ministries of environment, agriculture and others. And so, we'll set a set of several bilateral dialogues that eventually, I hope, would produce new agreements.

**Q. A lot of the research work is done at the university level, though, and that brings us to the problem where a lot of Canadian universities have faced the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions issue, with clubs or groups of academics trying to have the BDS polices adopted. How can the Israeli ambassador and the Israeli embassy negotiate this minefield to bring about your MOUs and this cooperation?**

**A.** Well, I think that there are at least two ways to go about it. One is to differentiate between the political talks around campuses and the industry of lies, and cooperate in joint research: start new projects with universities, connect universities here to universities in Israel and work together on *tikun olam*, of doing something that the world would be able to benefit from. We have so many other scholars and researchers who we should work with. We should fight and combat against BDS and all these things, but at the same time, cooperate with our friends.

**Q. I know you were involved with Canadian parliamentarians before. How does that prepare you for this job?**

**A.** As a member of Knesset (2013-2015), I then chaired—from the Israeli side, of course—the Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Association with Canada, and it enabled me to meet some members of the Canadian Parliament, of course, and host them in Israel. When they came in a delegation, it helped me to understand the political system here, better, I

would say. But now, when I'm here, I have to tell you that I have so much more to learn. I knew a little bit, but I have to say I'm fascinated by the political system here and by the structure and by the Constitution and the history of it. It's different from the political system that we have in Israel. We have a multi-political party system based on coalition. We have small political parties who have been and still are the king-makers. The power of veto in our political system, it's different. We have a prime minister and a president, but we don't belong to any other group of countries like the Commonwealth. It's fascinating.

**Q. Have you ever been to Canada at all before this time?**

**A.** When I was a student, I was sent by the Jewish Agency to be shaliach to a JCC summer camp here in North America, in Atlanta, Georgia. And every summer after the camp, we still had the visa that would still enable us to travel for a few more weeks. So, for a few summers, I remember that after finishing the camp, I came here to Canada, and I traveled mainly in the west, I have to say, in the Rockies and in Vancouver and British Columbia. But I remember being in Toronto and Niagara Falls.

When I was a kid, I grew up in kind of an outdoor atmosphere. My father was a farmer, and I was educated with a love and appreciation for the environment and for the outdoors. And I remember when I first came to Canada as a traveler, the nature, the environment, the outdoors impressed me so much. And now as an ambassador, again, this is another thing I would like to do, to learn from you in Canada, how to appreciate the environment and the outdoors. I think that Israel can contribute, but also can learn from Canada at many levels and many aspects.

**His son is an elite hockey player**

**Q.** So let's pivot to some more fun things. I was told to ask you about your son in hockey. That is a door opener to anybody in Canada. Just mention that and they'll greet you with open arms! Are you allowed to tell me? Will your son kill you? (*He now plays on the Columbia University men's hockey team in New York.*)

**A.** Well, he will kill me anyway, but I'm going to tell you! I have three children. Eitan is my oldest. He's 26 now. He's a student at Columbia University in New York. My daughter Tamara is 24, and she's also a student at Columbia University in New York. And my little son, Tomer, is four years old and he is here in Ottawa with me. When Eitan, my oldest, was in ele-

mentary school in Israel, hockey just started to be introduced to Israel by friends who immigrated from Russia. But since in Israel there were no ice arenas at that time, there was only one in Metula, in the north. *[Editor's note: founded with the financial help of Canadians including Sidney Greenberg]* So they started with roller hockey. My son started when he was in the first grade, or second. And at some point, they started to build ice arenas for ice hockey. So, he moved from roller hockey to ice hockey. By the time he was 16 or 17, he was captain of the youth national team. And they were part of hockey in the Europe leagues. And they competed there. And at some point, they became number two in Europe. The Israelis who had no hockey in our tradition. So, I was very proud then. And now, of course, he's in New York. I'm here. And hopefully he could come here. We will go together to hockey games, and he will explain to me what it's all about, because that's another thing I need to learn, right?

**Q. But if you are a hockey dad, you would know all this stuff, like going to the arenas with your thermos of coffee and being cold. Right? You never did that?**

**A.** Of course I did it. I went with him to Europe. I accompanied him and, yeah, well, I know how it feels, but I still need some explanation. The teams and who's against who. I still need to learn.

**Q. And the European rinks are different. But what number did he wear in Israel?**

**A.** 88.

**Q. Any particular reason?**

**A.** I don't know how it started, but it was 88 and his last name, because I'm proud of him saying our last name. Under the number 88, Hoffman.

**Q. So unfortunately, Israel is not going to be in the hockey part of the Beijing Winter Olympics. They didn't make it, but they're number 34 overall in the IIHF rankings. So, are you a hockey fan at all?**

**A.** Not a hockey fan, for sure. But now is my opportunity. Now it is my opportunity to become a real hockey fan.

**Q. All right. What is the funniest thing that's happened to you since you came to Canada as an ambassador?**

**A.** OK, look, it's not that funny, but whenever I leave home, and get into the car to go somewhere, I'm still forgetting to take my coat. I know it's not funny. I'm still used to going out with almost just a T-shirt, but it's taking me longer than I expected to get used to winter. ■

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# The list of Jewish community members named to the Order of Canada at the end of 2021



From left: Olga Korper, Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl, Jane Heyman and Cara Tannenbaum. (Supplied photos)

Twenty prominent members of the Jewish community are newly appointed to the Order of Canada, including philanthropists, scientists, artists, lawyers and academics.

The list of 135 Canadians who were named to the country's highest civilian honour was announced by Governor General Mary Simon on Dec. 29. The appointments included two Companions, 39 Officers, one honorary Member and 93 Members. More than 7,000 people have been invested into the Order since it was created in 1967.

The appointments included survivors **Max Eisen** of Toronto, **Rose Lipszyc** of Thornhill, Ont., and **Eva Olsson** of Bracebridge, Ont., who were all recognized for their dedication to Holocaust education.

**Graham David Sher**, CEO of Canadian Blood Services; and academics **Carol Tator** and **Frances Henry**, of Toronto, who have studied systemic racism, were all named as Officers of the Order of Canada.

Others named as Members include:

- **Justice Sandra Chapnik**, Toronto, who was recognized for her leadership in the legal field and advancement of women. Chapnik has also served on the boards of Holy Blossom Temple, Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care and ORT Toronto.
- **Robert Eisenberg**, Toronto, for his commitment to “the revitalization of Toronto’s architectural heritage.”
- **Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl**, Toronto, for his leadership of Beth Tzedec Congregation and his commitment to interfaith dialogue.
- **Leo Goldhar**, Toronto, who has served as chair of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto’s Tomorrow campaign.

- **Morris Goodman**, Hampstead, Que., for his leadership in the pharmaceutical industry and his philanthropy.
- **Jane Heyman**, Vancouver, for her contributions to Vancouver’s theatre sector.
- **Olga Korper**, Toronto, for her contributions to the visual arts through her impassioned promotion and exhibition of Canadian and international contemporary art.
- **Barbara Landau**, Toronto, for her work as a lawyer and psychologist on dispute resolution and family law reform as well as her interfaith initiatives. She is the co-chair of the Canadian Association of Jews and Muslims.
- **Lynn Posluns**, Toronto, for her contributions to research on women’s cognitive health through the funding of the Women’s Brain Health Initiative.
- **Harvey Secter**, Winnipeg, who served three terms as Chancellor of the University of Manitoba and was a member of the ownership group of the Winnipeg Jets.
- **Robert Silver**, Winnipeg, a former chancellor of the University of Winnipeg and a co-owner of the *Winnipeg Free Press*.
- **Cara Tannenbaum**, Montreal, for her leadership in geriatrics, women’s health and gender research.
- **Janet Walker**, Toronto, for her expert legal authority in commercial arbitration and conflict of laws, and for advancing legal procedural standards in Canada.
- **David Zussman**, Victoria, for his contributions to public service management and policymaking, as a scholar, public servant and sought-after advisor.
- **Eleanor Fish**, North York, for her contributions to immunology, including her groundbreaking studies on the use of interferon-alpha in the treatment of disease. ■

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