

The Canadian Jewish News



MY WAY BIKERY

Leah and Moshe Appel bring kosher baking to Vancouver Island / page 2

Donate to
The Canadian Jewish News
 and **receive a tax receipt**
thecjn.ca/donate

WWW.THECJN.CA

Rabbi Erwin Schild talks about his life at age 103	page 3
A new poll about Israeli politics stirs controversy	page 4
Anthony Housefather's view on federal French bill	page 6
Ben Carr looks to replace his late father Jim as MP	page 7
Lives: Leo Goldhar, Lou Billinkoff, Michael Brown	page 8

The secret behind the ‘Challnuts’ made by Leah and Moshe Appel of My Way Bikery—the only kosher bakery on Vancouver Island

/ Ellin Bessner

British Columbia’s lieutenant-governor didn’t mention anything about kosher food when she made a speech from the throne in February 2023 to outline government priorities for the year ahead.

But, later that day, members of the province’s Jewish community made a point of presenting a box of kosher pastries known as “Challnuts” to Premier David Eby.

The unique desserts came from the My Way Bikery—the only kosher bakery on Vancouver Island, which was opened in January by a couple of ex-Montrealers: Moshe and Leah Appel.

But getting their signature creation ready was a close call. The bakery was closed for the night when a local rabbi called them with an order to take it to the legislature in Victoria.

“So here were my employees, cutting the Challnuts into little pieces,” recalls Leah. “You know, trying to make enough to feed everyone.”

Challnuts are Leah Appel’s take on jelly doughnuts. She uses challah dough, which is coated with egg whites and raw sugar, and baked with the jelly inside.

The pastries predated the bakery itself, when the Appels were selling baked goods out of their home kitchen in Nanaimo, B.C.

A customer asked Moshe for sweet challah buns, and Moshe assured him he had some. The man was charged for a dozen. And then Moshe informed an unsuspecting Leah she needed to dream up a recipe, pronto.

“I said, ‘I don’t know how to make that,’ Leah told him. “And he said, ‘Well, he already paid, so figure it out.’ And I said, ‘No.’ And he said, ‘Well, of course you can, because you’re you!’”

Since then, Challnuts have become her signature dish. They’ve proven so popular that someone stole an entire tray of them right out of their new bakery, which opened Jan. 3 in the Victoria Public Market.

My Way Bikery also supplies challahs, cakes, salads, and sandwiches to the growing Jewish population of Vancouver Island. They make Montreal-style bagels, too, although without a wood-fired oven to bake them in. (Getting a permit proved impossible.)

The venture was a major pivot for both Appels—they each quit their jobs in marketing and tech to try their hand at the food-services sector. They bought the location and the equipment from a non-Jewish baker who had the site in the market until he had to sell quickly due to a family medical crisis in Nova Scotia.

The unusual name is a combination of their home business My Way Bakery, and the name of the former owner’s establishment.

He called it the Bikery because he started out riding around the city selling pretzels from his bicycle. (After striking up a friendship with a local Chabad rabbi, the former owner also branched out into making kosher challahs in 2021.)

Although launching the business led Leah to start using her Hebrew name—rather than Lois—starting a totally kosher bakery is the latest step in Moshe’s own personal spiritual journey to reconnect with his Jewish roots. The Montreal native comes from a prominent Jewish family; his grandfather Moe Appel, ran Israel Bonds and was active in synagogue life.

But it was during the pandemic that Moshe’s life changed direction. He began to wear a kippah and tzitzit, he now prays three times a day and he is very close to the local Chabad community on Vancouver Island.

The couple originally wanted to serve dairy products like cheese blintzes, but they soon discovered that the cost to import strictly kosher dairy products to Victoria from the United States via Montreal would be prohibitive.

That’s why, at least for now, their menu has many vegan choices, and is all pareve food—which gets inspected and approved by the Vancouver-based Kosher Check’s team of rabbis.

Even though the overwhelming majority of their customers either don’t keep kosher or aren’t Jewish, the Appels wanted to make sure that Chabad rabbis and their families have a place to eat in Victoria.

“Who else is going to do it in a small community if we don’t?” asks Leah.

For example, a rabbi and rebbetzin from Calgary recently pre-ordered much of the bakery’s menu for a rare trip without their children—and expressed gratitude for not having to bring their own food.

“So that’s the kind of thing that makes me feel so good about it.”

They also get requests from Israel asking them to make shiva platters, or send cookies to someone’s cousin who lives in Victoria. Inmates who request kosher meals at the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre also have it supplied by the Appels—including 16 loaves of bread per month.

My Way Bikery is a labour of love for the Appels in more than one way. Moshe and Leah have known each other since elementary school and were best friends while growing up in Montreal. After high school, they each went their separate ways, which included marrying (and having children) with their previous spouses.

Now in their early 40s, reconnection came during the period of COVID lockdowns. Appel was a single father living in B.C., while Leah’s marriage was ending. Their new blended family includes two daughters and a son—and two dogs.

Ten-year-old Raya works occasionally in the bakery, too. She made all the hamentashen dough for Purim.

But there won’t be any matzah bagels or other sweet creations coming out of their ovens for Passover. Not if they want to keep their kosher hechsher. The rabbis told them making matzah beforehand as a gimmick isn’t a good idea, because customers might use it during Passover.

Staying open would also have required them to sell their chametz, clean out the entire bakery, then keep the ovens off for one week prior to the holiday. Instead, they’ll stay closed.

Despite all the goodwill and publicity the couple and their bakery has received, they’re aware of the risk of being prominently located in a public market.

Given how Moshe's observant Jewish image is part of their branding—along with Hebrew letters on the store's sign—they did consider whether it would open them up to antisemitism. Victoria has gone through several incidents recently, including a threat made to the city's Jewish film festival, and the local Chabad building being defaced.

But Leah says she's encountered a local fascination with their heritage.

"People really like Jews here and they really are interested because Moshe wears the 'team jersey,'" she explained, referring to her partner's long beard, kippah, and fringes dangling over his jeans.

"People will just stop him on the street and say 'My grandfather was half-Jewish. Let's talk about Judaism.'" ■

Ellin Bessner is chief correspondent of *The CJN Daily*.

Rabbi Erwin Schild of Toronto's Adath Israel Synagogue talks about personally experiencing 103 years of Jewish history

/ Lila Sarick

Rabbi Erwin Schild sits in his comfortable North York bungalow, surrounded by evidence of a long life, well-lived. The four books of memoirs and collected sermons that he has written lie on the coffee table, pictures of grandchildren and great-grandchildren line the bookshelves.

Nestled in the lapel of his sport jacket is the pin denoting he is a member of the Order of Canada, awarded in 2001 for his interfaith work among other contributions to Canadian life.

The rabbi emeritus at Adath Israel Synagogue celebrates his 103rd birthday on March 9. This year, the day will be marked quietly. His three children, who all live in Toronto, will be paying him a visit.

He is frail and tethered to an oxygen machine. His speech is quiet and halting. But his mind is still sharp, as he recalls a childhood in Germany, barely escaping the Nazis and then decades spent leading one of Toronto's largest Conservative synagogues.

For his 100th birthday, the synagogue organized a large drive-by parade. This year, they suggest members contribute to a fund to repair and maintain their Torahs, including one that was dedicated to Rabbi Schild.

It's a fitting gift for a man who was a young seminary student in Germany during Kristallnacht in 1938 and watched the wanton destruction of sacred books at his school.

"I was unable to go into the building, I was scared to be (near) the armed Nazis," he recalled in an interview, a few days before

his birthday. "They were throwing out of the windows whatever they could find."

As much as he wanted to rescue the Jewish texts he had studied, he didn't dare enter the burning building, he said. "They would have killed me."

Born in Cologne, Germany in 1920, Rabbi Schild has been an eyewitness to the cataclysmic forces that shaped Jews throughout the 20th century.

Days after Kristallnacht, he was arrested and imprisoned in Dachau concentration camp.

In an interview with *The CJN* a few years ago he recalled "Dachau was daily torture, from the moment you were woken up out of the barrack."

He was hungry and cold, forced to stand still for hours as the SS guards watched. "If you talked to your neighbours, they kicked you. If you fell, they kicked you again."

His mother was able to secure his release from Dachau, and he fled first to the Netherlands, and then to England where he resumed his studies. But this respite would prove to be temporary. In 1940, after a year in London, he was shipped to an internment camp in Canada, along with other German-Jewish refugees who were suspected of being Nazis.

Finally, with the help of Canadian Jewish Congress, he was released in 1942, and resumed his studies at the University of Toronto and Yeshiva Torah Chaim.

(His parents and many of his childhood friends would die in the Holocaust. His older brother, Kurt, was one of the last Jews to leave Germany in 1940, while his younger sister, Margot, survived the concentration camps and a death march at the end of the war, and eventually moved to the United States.)

Rabbi Schild earned a BA and an MA in Semitic Languages and Literature, on the advice of Rabbi Abraham Price, who was the head of the yeshiva and had also been instrumental in securing the release of several of the young interned Jews.

"He recommended I go to university. He realized that a successful rabbi has to have a general education, so he made sure not only that I had the benefit of a rabbinic education but also had an academic education and that has helped me."

By 1947, Rabbi Schild was the rabbi at Adath Israel, the only synagogue where he would ever work.

At the time it was known as the Rumanishe (Romanian) Shul, on Bathurst and College streets, but it wasn't long before it followed the Jewish community northward to the suburbs.

Rabbi Schild doesn't hesitate when he recalls his first salary of \$1,500, for the year—and the envy he felt toward colleagues who received a house as part of their compensation.

Instead, he and his late wife Laura, bought their newly built home on a quiet street, not far from the synagogue, where they raised three children.

He served the synagogue for two or three decades before anyone thought of offering him a contract, he said. "I loved the congregation and the congregation loved me."

Under his direction, membership grew from 180 families to 1,900 families: "That was my pride, my wonderful reward for what I did."

Adath Israel, like other Conservative synagogues, was hard hit by COVID, and is considering merging with another area synagogue. Rabbi Schild keeps abreast of shul politics, but wisely reserves comment. "I'm very glad I don't have to make

the decision. I had almost 70 years as the decision-maker.”

During his time in the pulpit, Rabbi Schild saw transformative changes in Jewish life, beginning with the destruction of European Jewry and the birth of the State of Israel.

“It was almost fantastic to witness a situation that Palestine would become the State of Israel.”

He thinks he was probably studying at the yeshiva when he heard that the United Nations had approved the partition plan. “We wanted to go out of the house and go in the street (and say) that Palestine is going to be a Jewish home for the Jewish people.

“It was ecstasy when the United Nations confirmed. It was one of the highlights of my life.”

He is bothered that today Jews living in the safety of the diaspora feel free to cast judgement on Israel.

“If I want to influence them, then I have to live there.”

He has also seen the troubling rise of antisemitism, more than 80 years after he was interned in Dachau. But it is not a repeat of 1939, he says.

“Not quite. The German nationalism had always a bit of antisemitism. A Jew was always a stranger.”

Still the trend is worrying. “I think it’s dangerous, unless we have the tools, the education, and especially the Abrahamic (faiths), the Christians have to almost take it as a vow to be pro-Jewish.”

In the intervening years, the rabbi worked hard to educate his Christian neighbours, travelling to Germany to speak about the Holocaust and interfaith relations. In 2000, he was awarded the German Order of Merit, a year before he received the Order of Canada.

Receiving Canada’s highest civilian honour was a pleasant surprise, which he didn’t expect, he says. “I’m very pleased to help those who want a better Canada, without antisemitism.”

But the days of meetings and delivering sermons have passed, he reflects.

“Age comes with impairments. My whole life I had to talk, speak and lecture. It’s impossible now.”

Today, he visits at home with old friends and family, accompanied by a gentle caregiver who affectionately calls him “Saba”, Hebrew for grandfather.

“This is a stage of life when... just to be there is an event, an event to be cherished.” ■

New poll shows Canadian Jews dissatisfied with current Israeli government’s proposals

/ Lila Sarick

A majority of Canadian Jews feel that Israel is “moving in the wrong direction,” according to a recent poll commissioned by New Israel Fund of Canada and JSpaceCanada.

The poll, conducted by EKOS at the end of February, found that 59 percent of people surveyed felt that Israel was moving in the wrong direction, while 13 percent felt it was moving in the right direction and 20 percent said they did not know.

The survey comes two months after a far right-wing government coalition was formed in Israel, led by Benjamin Netanyahu. Since then, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have turned out to protest policies that would restrict the power of the supreme court, and infringe on civil rights.

“Some of the things that were surprising to us (in the survey) were just how overwhelming opposition to the legislation being put forward by the government was. I thought we would have some 50-50s, but almost in every case, on every policy proposal by the Israeli government today, we’re looking at a six-to-two majority, an eight-to-two majority,” Joe Roberts, director of JSpaceCanada, said in an interview with The CJN.

Three-quarters of respondents said that they are either “very attached” (34 percent) or “somewhat attached” (41 percent) to Israel.

The poll surveyed 288 adults who identify as Jewish by religion or ethnicity. The margin of error is 5.8 percent.

Professor Robert Brym, of the Department of Sociology and Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto, who oversaw the survey said more surveys are needed to corroborate the findings.

“However, this poll provides a fair baseline representation of Jewish community perspectives in issues of viral importance to the approximately 404,000 Canadians who identify as Jewish by religion or ethnicity,” he said in a press release issued by the two groups.

Policies that affect societal change and personal civil rights prompted the strongest opposition, with 83 percent of respondents opposing proposals that would ban Pride Parades and legalize conversion therapy for LBTQ people, while 89 percent of those surveyed opposed gender segregation in public spaces for religious reasons.

Proposed changes that would make it easier for Israel’s government to overturn decisions by the supreme court were opposed by 74 percent of respondents; while changes to Israel’s Law of Return, to not allow those with one Jewish grandparent to claim citizenship were opposed by 60 percent of those surveyed.

Political decisions concerning the West Bank were met with less unanimity, with 54 percent of respondents saying they opposed expansion of settlements in the West Bank. On the question of “incorporating parts of the West Bank into the State of Israel,” 49 percent were opposed, while 23 percent supported the proposal, 16 percent neither opposed nor supported it and 13 percent had no response.

The survey also examined attitudes toward allowing Itamar Ben Gvir, Israel’s minister of national security, and Bezalel Smotrich, minister of finance and minister responsible for the West Bank to meet with Canadian government officials. Over half, 58 percent, of respondents opposed establishing ties with Ben Gvir, who the survey question identified as having been convicted of incitement to racism and with Smotrich, who had described himself as “a proud homophobe.”

Results of the survey indicate that the Canadian government and mainstream Jewish organizations should be taking a harder line with the Netanyahu government, beginning with refus-

ing to establish ties with Smotrich and Ben Gvir, the two sponsoring organizations say.

“The greatest contribution to people who want to bash Israel or to inflame antisemitism is to hear abject silence from the Jewish community that we would implicitly support Smotrich and Ben Gvir, the radical policies of this government. We need to be talking also about how silence on those issues is a very bad look for Jews,” said Ben Murane, executive director of the New Israel Fund of Canada.

The survey “showed a lot of unity in the community, but a unified voice that may not be represented and not being heard,” Roberts said.

“We’re often called ‘alternative voices’ in the community. We’re not alternative voices, we’re representing the majority of Jewish Canadians. Actually, the organizations that are unwilling to take a stand are the outliers, and not organizations like JSpaceCanada and New Israel Fund of Canada.”

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, which represents “more than 150,000 Jewish Canadians affiliated with their local federations,” disputes that it has been silent in the face of recent events in Israel.

“While marginal groups may heckle from the sidelines, in fact, CIJA not only has the access, but has used its privileged position to meet with senior Israeli leadership on both the government and opposition sides. Indeed, such encounters took place just a week ago, when a CIJA leadership mission travelled to Israel, nor has that been the first intervention since the Netanyahu-led coalition formed the current government,” CEO Shimon Koffler Fogel said in an email to The CJN.

“Our ongoing consultations with communities across the country put us in a unique position to convey concerns, share our perspective and offer suggestions on how Israel can most constructively move forward. ‘Quiet’ neither means silence or agreement, rather, it speaks to a more effective, nuanced and responsible way of sharing concerns and offering suggestions.”

Smotrich is scheduled to address a meeting of Israel Bonds in Washington, D.C. on Sunday, March 12. The Biden administration has said it will not meet with him and several news outlets have reported that American officials are considering denying him entry into the country.

Already a controversial figure, Smotrich called for the West Bank town of Huwara to be “wiped out” in a statement on March 1. The comments came after Jewish settlers burned and ransacked the village, killing one Palestinian man, in the wake of a shooting that left two Jewish brothers dead.

The minister has since said his remarks were taken out of context and he was referring to the Israeli army targeting terrorists and their supporters.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews condemned Smotrich’s views, when he visited the UK a year ago. More recently, 120 American Jewish leaders signed a statement saying he “should not be given a platform in our community.”

“These two ministers (Smotrich and Ben Gvir) are so far out of line with Canadian values we want the government to send a message that we will not build relations with them, meet with them in Canada or elsewhere. There’s not going to be a conversation at the G-20 on the sidelines between the finance ministers... It’s not going to happen,” Roberts said.

The situation in Canada and the United States are not compara-

ble, because the United States requires visiting Israelis to obtain a visa, while Canada does not, CIJA pointed out in an email.

“When differences arise, as they have any number of times over the years, both Canada and Israel have articulated their positions and expressed concerns in a constructive way. We expect that will continue to characterize the relationship going forward,” Koffler Fogel wrote.

Prominent Canadian Jews have also voiced objections to the Israeli government’s proposed judicial reforms. Irwin Cotler, former justice minister and the current envoy on antisemitism, wrote in an essay in the Globe and Mail that the proposed changes to the Israeli Supreme Court “if adopted, will have the combined effect of seriously undermining the independence of the judiciary, its ability to review government legislation, the separation of powers and related checks and balances, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights.”

An open letter to Netanyahu from 15 major philanthropists, including Birthright co-founder Canadian Charles Bronfman, was also highly critical of the proposed judicial reforms. ■

Lila Sarick is news editor of The CJN.

Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs warns of legal action against two progressive Canadian groups: JSpace and New Israel Fund

/ Ron Csillag

All parties are tight-lipped about a warning of legal action from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) to two progressive Jewish groups.

Neither JSpaceCanada nor the New Israel Fund of Canada (NIFC) is commenting about a threat of legal proceedings CIJA issued on March 7.

The action arose following the release of a poll by both groups which showed that there is “widespread opposition” in Canada’s Jewish community to the policies of Israel’s recently elected government. A majority of respondents—59 percent—stated the Likud government was moving in the “wrong direction” on several issues, including its controversial plans for judicial reform. Only 13 percent of those polled supported the government.

The survey, titled “United in Opposition: Canadian Jews Oppose Policies Proposed by the Israeli Government” and conducted by EKOS Research Associates and sociologist Robert Brym, also found that 89 percent of respondents opposed gender segregation in Israel’s public places and allowing businesses to restrict services to women.

CIJA objected to one line in the 17-page summary of the poll's findings, that "notably, Shimon Fogel, President (sic) of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, has publicly defended measures such as sex segregation in public spaces."

In a letter to JSpace and NIFC, Richard Marceau, CIJA's vice-president and general counsel, called that passage "patently false and defamatory."

Fogel, CIJA's CEO, "is a respected professional in the Canadian Jewish community who has spent years serving the community and Canada," Marceau wrote. "He has dedicated his professional life to Canada's Jewish community and has a stellar reputation across Canada and abroad."

Joe Roberts, chair of the board of JSpaceCanada, told The Canadian Jewish News that his organization "can't comment on anything that's a pending legal matter."

Ben Murane, executive director of NIFC, said he could not comment on "litigation in process."

Marceau said both groups had a few days to withdraw the statement and issue an apology; to circulate the withdrawal and apology "to every known recipient of your document;" and to post them to social media platforms.

Failing those demands, "you will leave us with no other alternative but to begin legal proceedings against you."

However, not only has there been no withdrawal of the words under complaint or an apology issued publicly by JSpace or NIFC, but the poll's findings, including the passage in question, were still on both organizations' websites as of March 23.

As well, none of those involved would say whether CIJA's promised legal action would arise given that the deadline for the passage's withdrawal and an apology has passed.

"This is a legal matter and while it's in litigation, we have nothing further to add," CIJA spokesperson Nicole Amiel told The CJN via email. ■

Ron Csillag is the reporter emeritus for The CJN.

Quebec Anglos are alone in fight against Ottawa's language bill: Liberal MP Anthony Housefather

/Janice Arnold

Montreal-area Liberal MP Anthony Housefather says he would not vote for his government's proposed amendment to the Official Languages Act if Quebec's controversial new language legislation remains a part of it.

Housefather, who represents Mount Royal which has a large Jewish population, said the federal Bill C-13 references Bill 96 as a model for the protection and promotion of the French

language.

He said this would be another blow to the English-speaking minority in Quebec which almost unanimously views Bill 96 as an infringement on its rights.

Housefather calls the provincial law "egregious... It's mean-spiritedness, nothing else," and it is "ridiculous" for Ottawa to incorporate Bill 96 into federal legislation. Passed last June, the Quebec law strengthens the French language charter, while reducing government services available in English.

Housefather was the guest speaker at a virtual townhall meeting organized by B'nai Brith Canada, which opposes much of Bill 96. The federal Bill C-13, which was introduced one year ago, amends the Official Languages Act to enhance the use of French in federally regulated private businesses.

Having received second reading in Parliament, the bill is now under study by the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Housefather said this first major amendment to the Official Languages Act in 30 years would end a situation where French outside Quebec and English in Quebec were generally treated equally by the federal government.

Housefather stressed that both the Bloc Québécois and Conservative committee members have proposed amendments to the bill that he believes would make things even worse for Quebec anglophones. Some of these, which give Quebec more power over how federal services are delivered in the province, have been supported as well by the New Democratic Party representative on the committee, Niki Ashton, he said.

"The Conservatives' position is essentially the same as the Bloc's... to court nationalist votes in Quebec. It's awful," said Housefather.

If the bill returns to the House of Commons with the opposition parties' amendments maintained, Housefather said, "I could not possibly vote for it."

Housefather and fellow Montreal Liberal MP Patricia Lattanzio submitted their own amendments aimed at protecting the interests of the English minority in Quebec.

Marvin Rotrand, the Montreal-based national director of B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights, described the possible ramifications of Bill C-13 as "chilling" and said the situation is especially worrisome because Canadians outside Quebec, whether English- or French-speaking, are not adversely affected, nor are, of course, Quebec francophones, and therefore do not care.

Housefather concurred. "It's a real problem. English Quebecers do not have any allies now; they are very much alone in this fight... It's incredibly dangerous (because) people are unaware of what goes on in committee."

Housefather added that he has been "vilified" in the French media for having spoken out against Bill 96 being integrated into federal law.

He noted that Bill 96 limits those Quebecers who can receive government services in English to those who are eligible for English schooling in the province, that is, people whose parents or grandparents received the majority of their primary education in English in the province or the rest of Canada.

This excludes many of the up to 1.2 million Quebecers who identify English as their main language, he said.

The government promises health care is the exception, but Housefather said this is far from clear and may not be feasible

10 or 20 years from now with health care professionals no longer required to know English.

The Coalition Avenir Québec invoked the notwithstanding clause to pre-empt any challenge to the law's constitutionality, a move Housefather deploras.

English Quebecers may not be happy with the Liberals' proposed official languages amendments but they "would be 500 times more dissatisfied" if they were aware of what the opposition parties want, said Housefather.

It is possible that the amendments adopted by the standing committee could be reversed in the House of Commons, said Housefather, but another party would have to support the Liberals and, at this point, he is doubtful the NDP will do that.

In addition to members of the Jewish community, representatives of the Filipino, Black, South Asian and other communities participated in the national videoconference.

Also on the call was Burlington, Ont., deputy mayor Rory Nisan, who is vice-president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). He said he is "appalled" by the issues Housefather is shedding light on, and intends to bring them up with the FCM.

Joe Ortona, chair of the English Montreal School Board, which is currently contesting Bill 96 in court, said he will send letters to all MPs and senators expressing the board's concerns about Bill C-13. ■

Janice Arnold has been reporting for The CJN from Montreal since 1976.

Ben Carr hopes to follow in the footsteps of his late father, Jim, by seeking the Liberal nomination in his Winnipeg riding

/John Longhurst

Ben Carr wants everyone to know he loved, respected and admired his father—former Liberal member of Parliament Jim Carr—but he is running for the nomination for his dad's old seat as his own person.

"This campaign is about me, what I can contribute and my track record," he said of his decision to seek the Liberal party's nomination in Winnipeg South Centre, the seat held by his father from 2015 until his death in December 2022.

"I am incredibly proud of my dad, and I have benefitted from the values he raised me with," said the younger Carr. "I want to emulate my father, but I want people to vote for me, not be-

cause I am his son."

Carr, 36, is a former high school teacher and principal who currently is vice-president, stakeholder and government relations, for Indigenous Strategy Alliance, an organization that seeks to support and empower Indigenous people in Canada.

Although he grew up as "a white Jew in River Heights," Carr was interested in Indigenous issues from a young age.

"I wanted to learn more about Indigenous history in Canada, not something my demographic was typically exposed to at that age," he said.

Canada's Indigenous and Jewish communities have a lot in common, Carr said.

"We both have a history of mistreatment, although that mistreatment took different forms," he said, noting Indigenous people suffered much more than Jews in Canada through things like residential schools.

It has caused him to have a "deeper kinship" with his Indigenous friends, because of their shared background of mistreatment, he noted.

Although Carr has not experienced antisemitism first-hand, beyond hearing jokes and stereotypes, he knows it is real and is concerned about it. He remembers hearing stories about when his father was beaten up for being Jewish.

Carr, who has a partner and "a couple of dogs and cats," grew up going to Temple Shalom and Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Winnipeg. He is not a frequent attendee at synagogue now, except for special events and some High Holiday services.

His desire to serve as an MP grows partly out of his Jewish upbringing—the idea of being a positive force in the world.

"I have a commitment to the community where I grew up, played and worked," he said. Running for the Liberal nomination for Winnipeg South Centre "is another way I can make that contribution."

When it comes to Israel, Carr said he understands the important place it holds for Jews in Canada. But he also recognizes there are a range of views about it in the Jewish community.

"I very much believe (Israel) has a right to exist and to defend itself," he said, adding the country "plays a critical role as the only democracy in the region. It is important for Canada to retain a strong relationship with Israel."

If nominated and then elected to Parliament, Carr intends to be "a keen participant" in discussions about Israel in the Jewish community. But he also wants to focus on other issues of concern to the Jewish community in Winnipeg, such as antisemitism and various social issues.

As for his father's legacy, people still come up to him months after his death to say how much the elder Carr meant to them. "So many people have a story about him," he said. "I hear again and again what a warm, intelligent and supportive person he was."

Carr's goal is to be like his dad when it comes to listening, hearing different perspectives, thinking into the longer term and remembering that any power and influence he might have "comes from the people."

No date has been set for the nomination vote, or for the by-election to fill the seat ■

FOR MORE STORIES GO TO WWW.THECJN.CA

Obituary: Leo Goldhar, 91, a philanthropist with the vision to build Toronto's northern-most Jewish community centre

/Samantha Goodman

Leo Goldhar, a philanthropist, successful businessman and volunteer, died in Toronto on March 11. He was 91.

But no one could have imagined his success based on his first 20 years, said his son Mitchell Goldhar in his eulogy.

Leo's story began on Jan. 18, 1932. He was born to immigrants Rose and Sam Goldhar above their delicatessen and cigar shop near St. Clair Avenue and Dufferin Street.

With parents too busy to pay attention to him, Leo ran free amongst the streets of Toronto. With a distrust of systems and a confrontational attitude, he never finished high school.

"What Leo Goldhar did have going for him, however, was enormous ambition and luck," said Mitchell.

Leo was willing to try almost anything. He was determined to prove everyone wrong and he had incredible street smarts.

In his early 20s, Leo sold chains, shower doors and worked with tile and carpet companies. Eventually, he found success in the land development and construction business.

"It was a long and arduous journey and he endured many setbacks along the way," said Mitchell.

It was during this time that Leo met the love of his life, Sala Greenberg. Sala was a Holocaust survivor from Poland. She came to Canada through adoption by distant relatives, according to an account the family gave to Ynetnews.

"His marriage to our mother Sala was the foundation for most of the joy and fulfillment he experienced in his life," said Mitchell.

The couple spent a lot of time with Leo's sister Dorothy and brother-in-law David. On the last day of his life, Leo gave an interview about his immigrant parents with Dorothy and spoke to her on the phone.

As Leo found business success, he jumped into the world of Jewish communal life. He served as the campaign chair for UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and sat on the board of the Joint Distribution Committee which funds Jewish welfare programs in Eastern Europe.

One of his proudest legacies was playing a pivotal role in securing the land and raising funds for the Joseph & Wolf Lebovic Community Campus in Vaughan, just north of Toronto. The centre's convention centre and social hall is named in his and Sala's honour.

"At a time when Thornhill Woods was largely underdeveloped, Leo had the foresight and leadership to secure the funds and land needed to build the Lebovic Campus—one of the

most important hubs of Jewish life in the GTA. The impact of his legacy will be felt by families across our community for generations to come," Adam Minsky, CEO of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto said in a statement.

More recently, Leo joined the board of the UHN Foundation, a network of Toronto hospitals. Leo and Sala contributed to the creation of a foot and wound clinic at Toronto General Hospital, in memory of their friend, Doug Hanson and his wife, Tennys Hanson's contributions as the foundation's CEO.

For his leadership in philanthropy, Leo received the Order of Ontario and the Order of Canada.

"For never having finished high school, those were missing letters he always dreamed about and longed for having next to his name," said Mitchell.

Leo also served on the board of The CJN for many years.

"He was a valued board member who was fully engaged and instrumental in developing a number of philanthropic efforts on behalf of the papers. He was always supportive of The CJN but never hesitated to challenge the board and management to innovate and seek opportunities. We very much appreciated his involvement and perspective as a leader of the Toronto Jewish community," Elizabeth Wolfe, former president of The CJN's board, said in a statement.

Outside of his community work, Leo spent many memorable summers with this family at a cottage. In their eulogies, his grandchildren fondly recounted their memories of their zayde and his love for television, telling stories and their grandmother.

"We bid farewell to an intelligent, beautifully unique, colourful, larger than life man who was admired and loved. We will miss him, remember him and cherish his memory for many years to come. Rest in peace dad, you earned it," concluded Mitchell.

Leo Goldhar is survived by his wife Sala; three children, Stephen, Mitchell, and Karen; and five grandchildren. ■

Samantha Goodman is a freelance news correspondent for The CJN.

Obituary: 'Lightning Lou' Billinkoff, 99, became Canada's fastest sprinter when he was in his 90s

/John Longhurst

After suffering a serious heart attack, many people would take it easy. But for Winnipegger Lou Billinkoff, it was just the start of his goal to become a record-holding sprinter.

Nicknamed "Lightning Lou," Billinkoff died March 14 at age

99 after a ten-year sprinting career that saw him become the fastest Canadian man in the 90-to-94 and 95-to-99 age groups.

After suffering the heart attack at 89, Billinkoff—who worked for 40 years as an engineer at Manitoba Hydro—began a cardiac program as part of his healing process.

“When I was recovering, the doctor suggested I take some rehab physical therapy at a centre they have here, a program specially suited for people recovering from heart attacks,” Billinkoff said in an interview with the Jewish Independent three years ago.

“Part of the program is to walk on a track. I did that for maybe a year and, when I recalled how much pleasure I got when I ran earlier in life, I thought I’d just try it out and see what I still could do.”

One day, when he was running the 100 metres, his son, Errol, clocked him and said he was running at championship speed for his age.

Errol suggested he run competitively, and Billinkoff agreed to give it a try. To his surprise, he did quite well.

He went on to become the fastest 95-year-old in Canada in the 100-metre sprint. At the age of 96, he ran the 50-metre sprint in 15.67 seconds, beating the 2018 world best time in his category by more than a second.

Reflecting at the funeral on his father’s life, his son, Errol, noted it wasn’t until his heart attack that his father “hit his stride.”

After setting a new Canadian record at age 92, he “was hooked. It became like a drug and consumed his attention ever since... it was thus that the legend of Lightning Lou was born.”

Billinkoff’s prowess on the track turned him into a “media darling and local celebrity,” Errol said. “Soon his story spread across the country.”

When he set a new world record in 2018, it was “his greatest sprinting success ever,” he said.

When the pandemic curbed his sprinting career, Billinkoff took up shot put and discus to stay in shape. “I will never forget watching my 99-year-old father fling a shot put and hurl a discus so effortlessly across the lawn,” Errol said.

As his 100th birthday approached, his son thought he might tempt his father into competing one last time in a new age class. But Billinkoff “wasn’t biting. He argued that he hadn’t been training, wasn’t in shape and just couldn’t possibly do it. As far as he was concerned, he had hung up his track shoes for the last time.”

“While we are all sad about Dad’s passing, we also want to celebrate his life and his achievements,” Errol said. “He leaves behind big track shoes to fill.”

Also at the funeral, his grandson Asher remembered him as his zayde, and how “living down the street from him and Baba was a blessing. They would host us for Shabbat dinner every week without fail... that dining room table was the hearth of our childhood.”

Asher also recalled Billinkoff’s contributions through Hydro, including leading the effort to install lights in back lanes throughout Winnipeg, leading a project to relocate overhead wiring by placing it underground to help beautify the city, and installing the annual Christmas lights downtown.

“Zaida never discriminated and knew how to shine his light on everyone,” Asher said, adding that outside of work “he was

known for his humble, loving, jovial, quirky, organized and idiosyncratic personality... he entered every room with a big smile.”

While still working for Hydro, Billinkoff would always keep an eye on the streets for burned out lights, Asher remembered.

“If he encountered one, he would take note of its location and ensure that it was dealt with promptly. After hearing these stories from a young age, I had formed this image of him as the man who kept the lights on. Not only did his family depend upon him, but the community did too. Through his tireless efforts to keep the streetlights shining bright, Zaida embodied the spirit of the ner tamid, a symbol of God’s unwavering presence and care for his people.”

In an interview with the Winnipeg Sun after he broke the world best time in 50 metres for his age group, Billinkoff had this advice for those around his age who are considering giving running a try.

“You should try something even if you don’t think you can do it because I never imagined I would be in this position,” he said. “I wasn’t running at all. It surprised me. I didn’t know I could do it.”

In addition to his sons Lorne and Errol, Billinkoff is survived by his wife Ruth, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. ■

John Longhurst is the religion reporter at the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Tribute: Rabbi Professor Michael Brown, 84, shaped the field of Jewish studies across Canada and internationally

/Sara R. Horowitz

Rabbi Professor Michael Brown, who helped establish and shape the Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University, where he taught for half a century, died March 17, 2023, in Montreal, a few days before what would have been his 85th birthday.

Last year, Professor Brown’s influential contributions to Canadian Jewish Studies were publicly recognized by the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies which conferred upon him the prestigious Louis Rosenberg Distinguished Service Award. Professor Brown’s lifetime accomplishments reach beyond Canadian Jewish studies, touching a range of academic disciplines and community building. Among his other important awards was the 2011 Medal of Honour presented to him by the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan, Poland, in recognition of his important international work in Holocaust and

anti-racism education.

Professor Brown's professional life bore the mark of a remarkable service ethos. The well-being of students, the development of impressive academic programs, and community service beyond the campus were all things that Professor Brown saw as his mandate and responsibility.

Jewish studies in Canada and Jewish communal life in this country bear his strong imprint. He was recruited to build programs in Jewish studies and in Jewish teacher education at York University in the mid-1960s, during an era when York University was first coming into its own, and Jewish studies in Canada was first coming into its own. When he began his career at York, Professor Brown held a BA from Harvard College and an MA from Columbia University, and had just received rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary. He had not yet finished his PhD, which he completed at the State University of New York at Buffalo while working full-time as a professor.

Over his long teaching career, Professor Brown developed an interdisciplinary range of courses, encompassing Jewish history, Holocaust studies, and Hebrew literature. Thousands of students at York benefitted from his teaching, as did students in Israel, Poland, and Germany. He valued partnerships between the university and the community, and saw himself as deeply immersed in both. All my colleagues at York's Koschitzky Centre were recruited and hired under Professor Brown's aegis, or hold endowed chairs that he had a key role in establishing. We benefitted from his gentle mentorship and inspiration.

For Professor Brown, the line between private and public life was porous. In both, his actions were governed by his ideals and his love of education and community. For many years he made a practice of hosting students in his home to mark the end of term. He felt it important for students to see the inside of a professor's home, especially the walls lined with shelves sagging under the weight of books. He stimulated generations of students to pursue research projects in Jewish studies, careers in Jewish communal life, education, and human rights.

In addition to helping establish the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York, and serving for many years as its director, Professor Brown helped create and nurture York's unique program in Jewish teacher education.

His published works reflect the broad scope of his interest and commitments, and also his talent for collaboration: *Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759-1914*; *Teaching Teachers* (with Alex Pomson and Sydney Eisen); *Creating the Jewish Future* (with Bernard Lightman); *Approaches to Antisemitism: Context and Curriculum*; *Not Written in Stone: Jews, Constitutions, and Constitutionalism in Canada* (with Daniel Elazar and Ira Robinson);

Jews and Judaism: A Bibliography of Jewish Canadiana, 1965-2000; *A Guide to the Study of Jewish Civilization in Canadian*

Universities, and Encounter with Aharon Appelfeld (with Sara R. Horowitz).

Together with his colleague Mark Weber, Professor Brown developed the unique Mark and Gail Appel Program in Holocaust and Anti-Racism Education, which brings an international group of students in education, journalism, history, literature and other fields to study the Holocaust and post-war responses from Germany and Poland, and Canadian perspectives as a means to engaging antisemitism, racism, genocide, and other forms of oppression.

Professor Brown generously shared his expertise and experience in ways that benefitted the community – both in Canada and internationally: Toronto's Associated Hebrew Schools, TanenbaumCHAT, the United Synagogue Day School, Camp Ramah's North America-wide Mador program for emerging educators, Bet Sefer Le-Dugma in Jerusalem, the National Board of License for Teachers of Hebrew in North America and Academic Advisory Board, and the Moscow Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization and other institutions benefitted from his good judgment and passion for education.

Professor Brown served for many years as a member of the editorial advisory board of *The Canadian Jewish News* and on the editorial board of the Azrieli Foundation's Memoirs publication project in its early years. He helped to found Congregation Beth Haminyan in Toronto, and often functioned as its unofficial rabbi.

Born in Scranton, Pa., in 1938, Professor Brown and his late wife Frankie made Toronto their home in 1968. After retiring from teaching, Professor Brown moved to Montreal. An intense source of pride was his three children and their respective spouses: Joshua, Matthew and Leah, and Rabba Abby and Rabbi Adam Scheier, and his grandchildren, Ozzie and Theo Brown; and Aviya, Ayelet, Annael, Allegra, and Arella Scheier. As deeply as Professor Brown's colleagues and community feel his loss, theirs is deeper still.

With all of his accomplishments, Professor Brown was deeply humble, and a true mensch. He deflected attention to others and was generous with his praise. During the first few years of my marriage, I commuted between my job at an American university and my home in Toronto with my new Canadian husband. Colleagues in Jewish studies would hear "Canada" – and immediately ask, "Do you know Michael Brown." I had not yet met him, but sought him out. Michael became a valued mentor, an esteemed colleague, and a dear friend. I learned from his example, enjoyed his warm wit, and was fortunate to have him in my life.

Sara Horowitz is a professor of Comparative Literature and Humanities and former Director of the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University.

Please contact The CJN for advertising opportunities
info@thecjn.ca