

The Canadian Jewish News



CINDY SENI

Canada's plucky contribution
to **JEWISH MATCHMAKING on Netflix** / page 2

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Cindy Seni of Netflix's 'Jewish Matchmaking' says the reality show changed her approach to dating

/ Ellin Bessner

The Canadian star of Netflix's new *Jewish Matchmaking* reality TV series, Cindy Seni, isn't ready to reveal whether she found true love in the first season of the show, which debuted May 3.

But the former Thornhill, Ont. resident is already receiving fan mail from Jewish parents around the world who admire her decision to search for her "bashert" by using the services of the professional Orthodox Jewish matchmaker featured in the show.

"You and every single one of my Jewish friends' mothers are saying the same thing," Seni said during our interview from her home in Jerusalem, after I mused half-jokingly that maybe my children should apply to be on the next season.

Jewish Matchmaking follows a cast of diverse Jewish singles, based in Israel and the United States, who try to improve their dating success by abandoning romance apps in favour of asking a traditional religious *shadchan* to help them.

The producers hired Aleeza Ben Shalom, an American who made aliyah, like Seni did. The matchmaker claims to have arranged 200 successful marriages. Some of her catchphrases include "Date him 'till you hate him"; and "There's a mystery in your history."

Consulting a matchmaker was not completely foreign to Seni: the 28-year-old social media content creator had tried one several years ago, but didn't click with the *shadchan*. At the time, she decided not to proceed beyond the initial interview.

When Netflix reached out to Seni before filming began in the summer of 2022, she had just come out of a three-year-long relationship. It had ended shortly after she and her then-fiancé decided to get engaged. The idea of using a matchmaker was appealing, because they would propose only serious candidates who had been carefully vetted.

"I said to myself, 'If anyone could find your husband, it's definitely going to be Netflix.'"

Since moving to Jerusalem from Canada in 2018, Seni has mainly relied on dating apps to meet new people. She describes her experiences with Israeli men as "fun", in quotation marks, because although she had found plenty of hot guys "with abs" on these sites, most are reluctant to make a commitment.

"That's one of the main things about being in Israel is that people live each day as if it's their last," Seni said. "They just really don't think about that long term, they're just thinking about today."

Seni spoke to The CJN while her adopted country was currently experiencing a few days of Palestinian rocket attacks from Gaza that have seen hundreds of projectiles launched into southern and central Israel.

She said the tension and imminent threats from the incoming rockets haven't prevented *Jewish Matchmaking* from being

among the most watched shows on Netflix in Israel, since the eight episodes dropped.

The show was also in the top ten in Canada, which pleases Seni immensely since Netflix cut out anything that identifies her as Canadian, much to her great disappointment.

"It's funny because a few people messaged me saying, 'Oh, we can tell by the accent' so at least there's that," Seni said.

The show was filmed in the summer of 2022, during COVID. That certainly played a role in Seni's on-screen social life, because two of the three men she was supposed to be fixed up with tested positive. The two had to drop out and Seni never saw them or even learned their identities.

She did go out on two dates with an Israeli technology worker: Daniel from Tel Aviv. The 34-year-old took her to an art gallery, but didn't seem to be enjoying himself. They talked about adoption and other potentially deal-breaker topics. But when Daniel showed up late for their second date, and didn't give her enough of an explanation for why, she was "#CindyOut", as she likes to call breaking it off with men.

It didn't take much for Seni to get used to having her every move captured by a camera crew while out on her dates, or meeting with the matchmaker. She's comfortable being in the spotlight: in her day job, she produces social media content for Brothers for Life, an Israeli charity that helps injured veterans of the Israel Defense Forces.

She also runs her own private business as an influencer called IsraelwithCindy, where she posts about life since making aliyah. Seni has nearly 20,000 followers on Instagram, including a few thousand who have become fans only since the show debuted.

Aside from her own journey on the show, Seni feels the Netflix series is playing an important role by introducing viewers to a diverse group of Jewish people, in contrast to the family dramas set in the closed world of the haredi community in previous hit shows like *Shtisel* or *Unorthodox*.

Jewish Matchmaking has a range of cast members including Seni, who describes herself as somewhere between modern Orthodox and traditional; a Reform Jew of colour; and even an Orthodox candidate who had to get permission from a rabbi before participating.

"Like 15 years ago, to have someone like me on the show, someone of a Sephardic heritage, it probably wouldn't have been done. So, I'm very, very proud of them for that," she said.

Seni's family has roots in Tunisia, Italy and in France, where she was born. The shooting in Tunisia that killed worshippers at the ancient El Ghriba synagogue on the island of Djerba last week hit close to home.

"My family comes from Djerba and has lived for thousands of years in that synagogue."

By 2000, her parents decided they could no longer live openly as Jews in France, because they felt the growing intolerance and antisemitism. The family of six moved to Toronto, when Seni was just six years old.

In Canada, Seni embraced the freedom to live proudly as a Jewish girl. She founded a Jewish student club at Langstaff Secondary School, then a Hillel branch on her university campus.

It was while completing her undergraduate degree in psychology at Glendon, the French-language campus of York University, that Seni took on the anti-Israel protesters and the student newspaper at the larger Keele campus over a controversial mu-

ral painted in 2012 in the student centre. It depicts a man wearing a keffiyeh who is holding rocks and looking at a field and a bulldozer. On his back is a Palestinian flag and a map of Israel.

After a stint working in public diplomacy for the Israel Consulate in Toronto, Seni chose to immigrate to Israel in 2018. At first, her parents weren't keen on the idea.

"My dad told me, 'If you want to move to Israel, you need either a job, a husband or money.' I said, 'Listen, I don't have any, I'm going anyway,'" Seni tells the matchmaker when they first meet.

It was important to her to join her older sister Shirley, who immigrated first. Their brother David, a lawyer, followed in 2020.

Seni's parents still live in Thornhill. Her father Pascal, runs a Paris-based fashion house producing women's accessories. Cindy and her two sisters appear as models for the shoes and handbags on the company website.

Her mother, Missou Ventura Seni, is a retired teacher now working as a writer of children's books.

Seni revealed that her parents' own love story also began thanks to a matchmaker.

Back in the day when her parents were fixed up, they didn't have other options and they made a marriage of it and were very happy, Seni said.

She thinks it's hard for modern young Jewish singles to find Mr. or Mrs. Right because social media and dating apps like Tinder or Jdate give people too much choice.

"This idea that we can always find better," she explained. "You go on the apps, and you see one guy is hotter than the other."

Being on the Netflix show and working with the matchmaker changed the way Seni approaches her dating life. The matchmaker felt that Seni was sabotaging her relationships, by breaking it off too quickly. Now, whenever she feels the urge to end things, or she feels bored, or their values simply don't align, she has to check in with the matchmaker first.

"I have to call her and break up with her first," Seni said, explaining that she has to rehearse the break up with her matchmaker. "And then we can talk about whether or not it's a valid reason."

For her part, Seni has never dated anyone who is not Jewish, and won't consider it. Partly because her grandfather is a Holocaust survivor, and partly because a great-grandmother fled from Libya "with gold in her bra" to keep her Judaism.

"For me, it's such a beautiful religion and culture and there's so much there. I want to be a part of the miracle that continues that," she said.

Although she lives right across from the Supreme Court building in Jerusalem, Seni has not participated in any of the street protests that have engulfed Israel for the past five months. She declined to reveal whether she supports or opposes the efforts by Israel's right-wing government to curtail the power of the judiciary.

Saying all the demonstrators look the same to her—both sides carry Israeli flags and they both sing songs, she said—Seni would like a solution found that everyone can live with.

"Whatever side you're on at the end of the day, we're Jews and we need to be united," she said.

While that debate continues, fans of the show are now obsessing online about whether Seni did wind up meeting someone special in Season 1. While her dates with Daniel didn't continue, she has been photographed since the show came out with cast member Noah Del Monte, an Italian Jew who also immigrated to Israel.

The pair attended a watch party for the season premiere, and one U.K.-based news outlet ran a story that the two are together.

Seni didn't confirm or deny it to The CJN, but she has announced in one of her Instagram posts that she is in a relationship and will give more details soon.

With the current hostilities now in Israel, she's decided to postpone the big reveal for the time being.

"You'll have to stay tuned." ■

The story behind the Israeli-Canadians taking to the streets beneath the banner of UnXeptable

/ Lila Sarick

Every Sunday since the start of 2023—rain or shine—a group of demonstrators has gathered in a public square in Toronto to protest the current government in Israel and its plans for judicial overhaul.

It's the same scene in Vancouver where a group carrying Israeli flags and signs that read "Saving Israeli Democracy" meets every Sunday as well.

This is the Canadian face of UnXeptable, a grassroots group started two years ago by Israeli expats in Palo Alto, Calif.

While hundreds of thousands of Israelis regularly take to the streets protesting, the movement has been echoed widely in the Jewish Diaspora. UnXeptable has about 50 chapters across North America, Europe and Australia, including the two in Canada.

Yael Meiri, the spokesperson for the Toronto chapter, was a member of an earlier protest group, started in 2020 when Benjamin Netanyahu was first re-elected as prime minister, despite facing a long-delayed corruption trial.

When Israel's most right-wing government to date proposed radical changes to the judicial system, triggering mass protests, it was easy to re-establish the movement in Toronto, she said.

For Meiri and the others who come out on a weekly basis, Israel is at a critical turning point.

"It's not another political debate in Israel as we have every week," she said in an interview with The CJN.

"We see it as an imminent danger to Israel's character as a democratic and liberal state. If Israel will not be liberal and democratic and Jewish, I don't think it will exist."

Meiri, who moved to Canada about 12 years ago, says it has been hard to convince Israelis in Canada to attend the gatherings. But it precisely because she is Israeli and Jewish that she feels compelled to rally every week in Toronto.

Many Israelis living outside the Jewish state have an internal debate about 'What is our place here?', Meiri said.

"I'm happy to call Canada my home, but Israel is definitely my home. This ambivalence that we hold all the time, it's not only that we have the right (to protest) but we have the duty."

“I strongly believe the fact that I, as an individual, was able to decide to leave Israel and to choose where I want to be... is only because there’s a strong Israel. If Israel would not be a strong democratic country, the level of antisemitism will rise and maybe we will be able to live (only) where they will let us, and where we will look over our shoulder to see if no one is chasing us.”

UnXeptable’s rallies are meant to bolster the spirits of Israelis, according to organizers like Daphna Kedem from Vancouver.

“We have so much feedback from rallies in Israel when they see the international videos and such warm comments, it’s so supportive,” she said.

The groups also act as a Diaspora arm of Israeli demonstrators, disrupting cabinet ministers’ visits abroad. Instead of the usual cheering crowds, Netanyahu’s visit to Berlin and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich’s trip to Washington D.C., were met with organized protests from Israelis, including members of UnXeptable.

In April, Toronto members of UnXeptable protested outside the Toronto Prosserman JCC where Aliyah and Absorption Minister Ofir Sofer was meeting with local rabbis and federation officials. The minister was whisked out a back door after his visit, though, so he did not have an opportunity to interact with the small group of demonstrators.

The group is making inroads into organized Jewish life in Toronto, though. Last week, Meiri and other organizers met with Adam Minsky, CEO of Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto, to introduce themselves and explain their goals. They also plan to march together at Toronto’s Walk with Israel on May 22.

At their largest protest in late March, held just hours after Netanyahu fired Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, a few hundred people turned out on a warm spring afternoon in Toronto. Usually, however, about 50 to 100 people show up, Meiri said.

Some of the city’s Reform and Conservative rabbis have attended and spoken at the weekly rallies.

While the Toronto group is glad to have the support of Jewish progressive groups and some Toronto clergy, Meiri notes that the rabbis are not bringing their congregants with them.

“In New York, you just say something and you have a thousand people in Washington Square. Here, obviously, the Israeli and the Jewish community are very conservative.”

In Vancouver, institutional support is much slimmer. Between 20 and 60 people come out to weekly protests, usually at Robson Square, but there’s no support from local synagogues or federation, says organizer Daphna Kedem.

“The North American Jewish Diaspora thinks, before this all happened, that you do not protest against the Israeli government. But I think it will bring on more antisemitism, if we don’t.”

The judicial reforms, if enacted, will eventually turn Israel into a dictatorship, she said.

“I can’t see myself anywhere else on Sundays, because it’s a safe place for those who care, who are in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Israel,” she said. “I think it’s going to be a long journey unfortunately.”

The protests in Canada will continue as long as the mass demonstrations occur in Israel, but given the speed at which events are changing, Meiri says it’s hard to predict how many more weeks they may be bringing their signs to the public square.

Meanwhile, chapters in both Toronto and Vancouver are also organizing meetings in private homes, where academics are in-

vited to teach about the situation in Israel to smaller groups.

Sometimes, as the Toronto group wraps up their rally at Nathan Philips Square, in front of city hall, they will see a group of Iranian protestors getting ready. The irony is not lost on Meiri.

“We always laugh and say ‘Look at them. That’ll be us in 20 years.” ■

Linda Frum says a now-dismissed defamation lawsuit about her Twitter account took aim at her because she’s a Zionist and Jewish community leader

/ Lila Sarick

Linda Frum says she consulted with security experts in the United States—and had them conduct a risk assessment—before she decided to fight a defamation lawsuit filed by an Arabic-language newspaper.

The former senator tweeted that the Montreal paper, Sada Al Mashrek, was the official voice of Hezbollah in Canada, which she corrected to “unofficial” voice, in response to a reply on Twitter.

Hezbollah has been designated as a terrorist organization by the Canadian government.

In an interview with The CJN, Frum said she consulted terror experts who were familiar with Hezbollah as the case was proceeding.

“I don’t want to sound glib, because taking this on, no matter who you are, it is a burden, it is oppressive and it can be frightening at times when you think ‘who am I up against exactly?’ I’m up against people who are aligned and support Hezbollah. That’s not an easy fight to engage in.”

The lawsuit alleged that Frum had damaged the paper’s reputation and financial situation, after two tweets she wrote in April 2022 relating to an interview with Patrick Brown, while he was campaigning for the leadership of the federal Conservative party.

Frum filed an anti-SLAPP motion to have the suit dismissed, arguing among other things, that the suit violated her right to free speech. (Anti-SLAPP motions allow for a lawsuit to be dismissed at an early stage if the suit is intended to limit public participation).

The lawsuit, which sought \$2.5 million in damages, was dismissed May 15 by Superior Court Justice Loretta Merritt.

“In my view, this case is about Sada wanting to silence Frum (and her network) and not about any real damage to Sada,” Justice Merritt wrote in her decision. “The potential harm to Sada is not sufficiently serious that the public interest in allowing its defamation case to proceed outweighs the public interest in

protecting Frum's expression."

Frum retired from the Senate in 2021 and took on the volunteer role of chair of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. She is currently the chair of UJA's Countering Antisemitism and Hate Committee.

During the Conservative leadership race, when Brown gave the interview to Sada, Frum's husband, Howard Sokolowski, was co-chair of the fundraising campaign for Pierre Poilievre, who ultimately won the leadership contest.

As Federation chair, Frum remained neutral during the leadership race, although Poilievre is a friend, she said. Her support for the current party leader had no influence on her tweets.

"In my position as UJA Federation chair, my job is to look out for the interests of the Jewish community," she said. "I felt that the calling-out of what Patrick Brown said was actually a necessary thing for me to do as a Jewish leader and it was beyond any sense of partisan choice between the candidates."

Frum tweeted that Brown's interview had raised "many red flags" comparing the situation of Palestinians to Ukrainian refugees and his opposition to Conservative Party policy to move Canada's embassy to Jerusalem.

The lawsuit was intended to intimidate her, she said, especially since the paper was seeking an "outrageous" sum of money.

In the decision, Justice Merritt noted that the \$2 million Sada sought in damages was "equal to 100 years of its annual revenue of approximately \$20,000" and the paper did not offer any evidence of financial losses from the tweets.

The defamation lawsuit will ultimately backfire, Frum said. The tweets were initially just retweeted by a handful of people, until the case was publicized. The judge has yet to rule on costs, but it will be "very expensive," for the paper, Frum said.

Although Frum's legal costs were significant, she said she did not consider settling the matter quietly and out of court.

"I knew if they intimidated me into deleting tweets, then that would get them really excited and it would only be a matter of time, before they started approaching... other people in the community to say 'delete the tweets.' I did feel there was an extremely important principle to defend here."

While she was not the first to comment on the newspaper, Frum said she was targeted because she is Jewish.

"This was just taking a real shot at me, as a representative of my community, as a Zionist."

The court concurred with Frum on this. The decision stated, "What is really going on in this case is exactly what Mr. Hussein Hobolah (principal of Sada) says in his affidavit: Sada thinks it is a tragedy that the Canadian Government has not done more to help the Palestinians, and this is because Ms. Frum and her network detract attention from Israel."

Lawyer Stephen Ellis, who represented Sada, did not respond to an emailed request for comment from The CJN ■

Benjamin's funeral home asks Ontario court to dismiss 'unreasonable' sanctions concerning its charitable foundation

/ Ellin Bessner

Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel, the largest Jewish funeral home in Toronto, was in Ontario's Superior Court of Justice on May 23 trying to overturn two orders that it must refund hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees that it deducted from in-house charitable foundations it set up in the names of deceased persons, dating back to 2016.

Last summer, the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) ruled that the family-run Benjamin Foundation should not have withheld 10 percent in administrative fees from the donations that family and friends of the late Liam Zisman, a 19-year-old Toronto student, made in his memory through the Foundation.

Benjamin's lawyer, Andrea Sanche, told the three-judge panel during a virtual court hearing that the BAO—a body that regulates funeral operators in Ontario—exceeded its jurisdiction, was biased, and that it also issued "unreasonable" orders.

Sanche argued that the Benjamin Foundation is not technically covered under the Ontario legislation regulating the death industry, even though the Foundation appears on the same website as the family-run funeral home.

At issue is whether Michael Benjamin promoted the Foundation as a licensed service when he met the teenager's parents over Zoom in early January 2022 to sell the overall package for the funeral and burial.

"A bad example is if Benjamin's chapel decided to start selling ice cream, you don't need a licence under this Act to sell ice cream," Sanche told the court. "You may need another [kind of] licence. That's colloquially somebody else's problem."

For over 40 years, the Benjamin Foundation has permitted its bereaved clients to park charitable donations until they are emotionally ready to decide how and where to distribute the money.

When the obituary for their son was being prepared, the Zismans stipulated they wanted any donations to go directly to the two charities and sent the links. However, the version that was initially published had removed the links and named the Benjamin Foundation as the clearing house. The incorrect version stayed up for the whole week of shiva.

The couple also then contacted Benjamin Foundation to see how much money had come in for the Liam Jacob Zisman Memorial Fund.

That's when they say they discovered not all the money would be sent to their designated charities.

The Zismans first tried to cancel their contract. When that didn't succeed, they filed a case in small claims court, which is still outstanding. They also complained to the BAO.

Although the Benjamin Foundation website notes their de-

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duction of 10 percent, the Zismans insist they were never told about this fee. They signed a contract sent by email which mentions it, but insist they were too distraught at the time to understand what they were signing.

The Zismans had thought that the entirety of the donations would be forwarded to benefit Chai Lifeline Canada and Camp Quality Canada, two charities that meant a lot to their late son.

The deduction did not appear anywhere on the Benjamin funeral home official fees list at the time.

Sanche, the lawyer for Benjamin's, maintained the fee was talked about during the Zoom call. But the BAO's lawyer told the judges the transcript of the conversation doesn't mention it.

Sanche also argued that the BAO compliance officer who investigated the complaint used "reverse engineering" in order to get the Foundation deemed to be "services" that are covered by the funeral home industry regulations.

She also stated that the BAO, in November 2022, admitted it had overstepped its jurisdiction. Soon after, then-CEO Carey Smith resigned, and was replaced by Jim Cassimatis, as interim CEO and registrar.

A lawyer for the BAO, Anastasia-Maria Hountalas, confirmed to the court that the BAO did not have the jurisdiction to make these financial penalty rulings it levied on Benjamin's. She asked that the whole case be sent back to the BAO, which will take a second look at it.

Two of the judges then asked for clarification on Michael Benjamin's relationship to the Foundation which bears his family name. Aside from being a licensed funeral director, Michael is a director of the Foundation, as are two of his children Marc Benjamin and Barbi Levitt, who also work for the family's funeral home and grave monuments divisions respectively.

"It may not have been clear as to when he switched hats," said Sanche, the lawyer for Benjamin's.

On July 28, 2022, the BAO told the funeral home operator to release all the monies it was holding to the Zisman's two charities, including the 10 percent processing fee.

The BAO also said Benjamin's should have been more transparent when it offered and promoted the Foundation service. On Aug. 10, a further ruling was published on the BAO website ordering Benjamin's to refund all the charity money it has ever deducted for processing fees from its Foundation donors, dating back to 2016.

That could amount to an estimated \$200,000.

Benjamin's was also ordered to take a series of other steps to fix its business practices and update its website and donations pages, which Benjamin's promised to do, in response to emailed questions from The CJN. The website has not been substantially updated—although, for a time, Benjamin's stopped charging the administrative fee. It has not released the funds yet for the Zismans charities.

The funeral home maintains it loses money on the Foundation, and tops it up to the tune of between \$100,000 and \$150,000 per year.

Following the BAO rulings, in September, the Toronto Board of Rabbis called on the funeral home operator to "uphold their sacred responsibilities, maintain a sacred trust, and treat mourners with fairness, compassion and transparency."

Benjamin's subsequently took the BAO to court, asking for a judicial review of these two rulings. They also started a libel suit in October against the BAO for comments made to the media about the case, including The CJN.

During Tuesday's court hearing, Benjamin's lawyer, Andrea Sanche, told the judges these comments did "considerable harm" to Benjamin's. She said the language used in the BAO's interviews with journalists were "unlike any other decisions they've ever made," including threatening to revoke the licence for the 100-year-old Jewish funeral provider.

Her client wants the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to quash the BAO's two rulings.

In her view, sending it back to the BAO for a second, albeit more thorough investigation would be unfair. Even though there is a new CEO and registrar now in place at the BAO, Sanche maintained the BAO would be biased.

"The [BAO] could have just looked at ethics, we have lots of authority to do that, we have a committee, but they didn't do that, and my client's concern is they're going to be back in the Wild West doing whatever they want again," she told the court.

While the BAO's lawyers seemed to agree that the case could become "a merry-go-round," they suggested that the court should let the provincial body do what Ontario's Legislative Assembly set it up to do in 2016. The BAO is a not-for-profit corporation administering provisions of the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act* on behalf of Ontario's Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery. It is responsible for protection of the public interest, but funded through fees levied on the industry, not by taxpayers.

"The hope is they do it right the second time," said Bernie LeBlanc, one of the BAO's two lawyers. "You can't allow perceived weaknesses to follow them forever."

But Sanche told the judges that—aside from the \$90,000 which Benjamin's have already spent on litigation—having Michael Benjamin, who recently turned 80, do the whole case over again would be like "the wild west".

"Unfortunately, my client who is a real person and prominent person in his community is going to be dragged back through all of this, which is a consideration," Sanche said.

The three-member panel of judges have reserved their decision on the case. ■

New play set in Christie Pits takes Toronto students back in time to the 1933 riot

/ Alex Rose

A new immersive play is transporting students back to the Toronto of 1933 to teach them about the infamous Christie Pits riot, which saw Jews and Italians battling antisemitic Protestants as a hours-long fight broke out at a baseball game.

The idea to make a show about the event first came from Joe Rosenthal, whose son Sam co-founded The Hogtown Collective, which produced *The Christie Pits Riot*. The elder Rosenthal knew his son's theatre company specialized in historical stories about Toronto, and he suggested the riot as a good subject.

The Hogtown Collective first produced a four-part podcast series about the riot, and Sam Rosenthal thought the project would likely end there.

“The dream was to get it done live, but I didn’t think it could happen because it’s such a huge show to mount,” he said.

However, the Toronto District School Board was searching for educational programming to commemorate the riot’s 90th anniversary, and they chose the Hogtown Collective for the opportunity.

“This exemplary, joint work by two of our TDSB heritage committees (the Italian and the Jewish committees) helps build bridges, break down stereotypes, and promote empathy and respect between different groups of students and communities by demonstrating our commonalities and historical support for each other,” said TDSB chair trustee Rachel Chernos-Lin.

The play, which takes place in the same ballpark as the original event, transports the audience to Toronto in 1933, introducing them to the simmering prejudices that led to the riot. It is centred on Joe Rosenthal’s family, who exemplify the racial tensions that affected Jewish Torontonians from all sides: from their fellow Torontonians, from public institutions like the police and the mayor’s office, and from the news coming over about Hitler’s rise in Germany.

The simmering tensions came to a head on Aug. 16, 1933, at Christie Pits Park. After a community baseball game, members of the antisemitic Pit Gang unfurled a large banner with a swastika painted on it. Some Jewish people who were present and expecting such an action tore down the banner, and six hours of street fighting ensued. The Jews and Italians fought together on one side, with Protestants on the other.

The play shows how some Jewish people prepared for the eventual confrontation. One of the main characters spends the days leading up to the riot collecting allies for the brawl, sure that violence would erupt at any moment.

For a city that was known as “Toronto the Good” at the time, it was a rude awakening for many about the true nature of their city. According to Sam Rosenthal, although Toronto has come a long way since then, the lesson is still relevant 90 years later.

“The goal of this piece... was to show all the students and people who don’t know about the riot what it was, and how it happened in Toronto, and how quickly it can happen again,” he said. “We want to really make it clear that we live in a wonderful diverse city, and that we’re grateful for it, but we also have to remember these things happen, and so we have to continually find ways to work together.”

Joe Rosenthal was born a year after the riot, but he grew up in the neighbourhood at a time when overt antisemitism was still commonplace in the city. He said it was important to teach people about the history of their city so that they would learn to look at the world around them with a more critical eye.

“People have no clue. Why would you know what’s going on if you didn’t live it or read it or were told about it? I think it’s so important, otherwise we all go along... and you don’t know what’s happening if these things aren’t brought to your attention,” he said.

“For many people, it was pretty tough. The Jewish crowd had a tough time. I mean, how would you like to walk into a store and see a sign saying, ‘Jews and dogs not allowed?’”

He also thought the play did a great job in evoking the sentiments and emotions of the era.

“It was so well done, I think that I could watch that scene a dozen times and still feel the power that was going on,” he said. “I mean, if you can imagine a riot in a city going on for hours, people beating the shite out of each other, it’s unimaginable. It’s unimaginable.”

About 5,000 students are expected to see the play by the time the

run ends on June 16. It runs twice a day from Tuesdays to Fridays, with shows at 10 a.m. and 1:15 p.m., and everyone is welcome to drop by the park at Christie and Bloor streets for a showing. ■

New incentive program is offering families up to \$100,000 to move to Ottawa and enrol in day school

/ Alex Rose

A Jewish day school in Ottawa is offering families up to \$100,000 to relocate to the city and become part of the growing Jewish community there.

The incentive is part of Torah Day School of Ottawa’s creative new program, which offers the money to families who move to Ottawa between August 2023 and July 2024 and send their children to the school. The gift is not without conditions; the family must use the money they receive as part of a down payment on a house in Ottawa and also commit to remain in Ottawa for a minimum of five years, attending TDSO.

Families are eligible for the full \$100,000 offer if they have two children attending Torah Day School in grades 1 to 8; \$50,000 if they have one child in grades 1-8, and \$25,000 for a child in kindergarten.

An important purpose of the initiative is to revitalize the city’s lone source of Jewish secondary education, the Yeshiva High School of Ottawa. The Yeshiva High School of Ottawa, formally Ottawa Torah Institute and Machon Sarah, has served the Jewish community in Ottawa for over 40 years. In recent years, however, it has seen waning numbers, sometimes even having few or no incoming Grade 9 students.

According to Stacy Goldstein, one of the founders of the initiative, while several grades at Torah Day School are projected to be strong incoming high school classes, increasing the numbers of elementary students across every grade would set up the high school for an even stronger revival.

This year, the day school has 90 children in kindergarten to Grade 8. The high school normally has 10 to 15 students and the goal is to boost numbers to between 20 and 30 students.

“We’re trying to just build the school up into a slightly larger level to create larger high school classes, so that it can get back into a vibrant zone again. It has amazing educators, it’s a really incredible academic institution,” Goldstein said. “But when it gets small, then families say, ‘You know, we want something bigger,’ and they elect to move out.”

The initiative, which is funded by private donors, is designed to provide that final push for Jewish families who are already considering making the move to Ottawa. It is the brainchild of Goldstein and her husband Michael, a local couple who currently send three children to Torah Day School.

Goldstein, born and raised in Toronto, is responsible for marketing and outreach for the initiative, including organizing the

initial interviews and visits for prospective families. Michael, who grew up in Ottawa, is the current chair of the board at Torah Day School. The couple met and got married in her hometown, but shortly after marriage they began looking for somewhere smaller to settle.

“Honestly, Ottawa wasn’t on my radar because, having grown up in Toronto, I really had no idea there was a Jewish community here,” Goldstein said. “But Michael had grown up here, so we obviously had come for a visit or two. And then, shortly after we got married, we explored the possibility of moving back here, and I quickly fell in love. It was really a very easy transition for me.”

“It immediately felt like we were home. We were having an amazing time being part of the community, even as a young couple. We met friends easily, we had short commutes, and we were able to buy our first home.”

It wasn’t just Goldstein who was surprised at the quality of Jewish life in Ottawa, her friends and family initially held the same misconceptions. But eventually, the Goldsteins’ experience not only changed their acquaintances’ minds about Ottawa, but even led some to consider making the same move.

“Over the course of the years after (moving), every time we’d visit Toronto, people would always ask us about Ottawa in this tone that sounded like they were expecting us to express some sort of discontentment, like, ‘When are you moving back?’ Goldstein said.

“But we kept saying ‘No, we really love it. We love Ottawa.’ And then, as real estate got more expensive... we had more friends reach out to us saying, ‘You guys are really liking Ottawa. Tell us more about it.’”

That interest led the Goldsteins to create an official program called Choose Ottawa to promote what they felt was their hidden gem of a Jewish community. They received a grant from the Jewish Federation of Ottawa to create a promotional website in 2019 (although it only went online in 2021 due to COVID).

They believe the quality of Ottawa’s Jewish community is enough of a draw on its own, but they were motivated to up the ante in response to ballooning real estate prices in recent years. An extra \$100,000 might be the difference between being able to purchase a home for many families—especially in Ottawa, whose real estate market is relatively affordable compared to most cities that host full-fledged Jewish communities.

The Goldsteins acknowledged the risk that Ottawa would not end up being the right fit for a family, in which case the recipients would have to pay back the sum. However, because the money originally went into a down payment for a home, the family should be able to recoup the price when they sell it. Beyond that, the program helps prospective families do their due diligence, so they are hopeful and confident that everyone who makes the move will be a good fit.

Since launching the program, the Goldsteins have heard from people located in more familiar Jewish communities, including Toronto, Winnipeg, the Maritimes, and the United States, but have also garnered interest from families as far afield as France and South America. The couple hopes to see somewhere from five to ten families take up the offer.

If it goes well with the initial cohort, says Goldstein, then there’s a possibility that the program will run again. In the meantime, she wants more people to be aware of the city’s “thriving” Jewish community.

“What we want people to know is that it’s already here. Everything you need is here. Mikvehs are here, shuls are here, Jewish learning is here, schools are here. There’s a beautiful community, and we just wanted people to know that this was an option.” ■

Climate change prizes have recognized the innovation of a group of Quebec researchers—with the support of Jewish National Fund

/Janice Arnold

Five projects based in Quebec were awarded a total of \$300,000 in the inaugural edition of JNF’s Climate Solutions Prizes, described as the largest incentive program of its kind in the province for non-profits and start-ups. The goal is to spur new ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency, and developing carbon capture capability.

The announcement of the winning projects on May 25 was the culmination of the first Climate Solutions Festival, held in Montreal and attended by more than 800 researchers, entrepreneurs and investors from Canada and abroad.

The winning projects were selected by an independent panel which judged them to be “ideas with demonstrable potential for real-world impact... and which can be developed and put to use quickly.”

More than 200 submissions were received, which were narrowed down to 25 finalists.

The \$100,000 Breakthrough Research Prize was open to institutions such as universities, hospitals, research and development centres, environmental charities, and non-profit incubators.

Projects in this category were scored on criteria including impact, innovation, development potential, and cost-effectiveness. The judges decided to split the prize with the larger share—\$60,000—being awarded to Philip Raphals and Charles Kiyanda of NovoPower International.

The pair proposed a cost-effective and sustainable method for generating power from waste heat that involves incorporating data centres and green hydrogen electrolyzers.

The runner-up \$40,000 prize went to Soodeh Abedini of Concordia University for an affordable electrochemical system for simultaneous conversion of carbon dioxide and methane to green storable energy.

The winner of the \$100,000 Start-Up Prize was chosen from among 10 finalists who proposed ways of employing clean technology to tackle existing or emerging climate change.

Jennifer Côté of Opalia convinced the judges that real milk can be made in a lab using only mammary cells from a cow. The new company claims the product has the same taste and nutrition as milk obtained conventionally.

The advantage is both environmental and ethical, Côté said, because the bovine’s methane emissions are eliminated and animal use is reduced.

The \$90,000 Student Entrepreneur Innovation Prize, awarded in partnership with Mitacs, a national research organization head-

quartered in Vancouver, will be paid out over two years to support the work of winner Yee Wei Foong, a McGill University student.

He is developing a process that decreases the carbon content of batteries with metal-free electrodes as an environmentally-friendly alternative to lithium batteries.

A \$10,000 Audience Choice Award winner, selected by festival participants from the pitches made by finalists for the Start-Up prize, went to Samson Bowen-Bronet of Altiro Energy. They were impressed by his project for large-scale energy storage that uses an iron-based clean fuel.

“The success of this year’s festival—a first in Quebec and Canada—demonstrates the broad engagement that exists to address the climate crisis within the entrepreneurial, research, and start-up communities,” said Galith Levy, chief Climate Solutions Prize officer.

The Quebec awards are an adjunct of the Climate Solution Prizes bestowed in Israel in their inaugural edition in 2022, which totaled over \$2 million to researchers proposing novel approaches to alleviating the climate crisis.

“More than just a prize, the organization aims to provide a platform where key players in the ecosystem are brought together to propel innovations with high impact potential,” stated Climate Solutions Prize executive chair Montreal businessman Jeff Hart, who conceived this JNF initiative. ■

This Holocaust survivor from Montreal will have her testimony preserved thanks to hologram technology

/ Janice Arnoold

When Marguerite Élias Quddus’s 11-year-old grandson asked her what her favourite dessert had been, she replied at once: raspberry tart.

Actually, the boy was not addressing his question to his *grand-maman* directly, but to an amazingly lifelike 3D image that answered just as she would have in real time, in her natural voice.

Marguerite is the first Holocaust survivor living in Montreal to record her life story with *Dimensions in Testimony*, a pioneering project of the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation that uses state-of-the-art technology to produce holograms of survivors.

With the huge amount of data pre-recorded, the virtual survivor can respond to just about any relevant question from viewers, who interact with him or her as if they were there in person.

But does a cherished dessert have anything to do with learning about the Holocaust? In Marguerite’s case it does because that raspberry tart is what one of the last women who hid her during the Second World War made for her.

Marguerite, born in Paris in December 1936, and her older sister Henriette were separated from their parents and hidden together for nearly three years, moving among farms and convents in France.

They were given non-Jewish identities and told to forget everything about their former lives. They learned how to remain silent, to pretend, and to adapt to frequently changing environments.

Marguerite has not remained silent. She has for many years been a volunteer with the Montreal Holocaust Museum (MHM), telling her story in schools and to museum visitors. She also wrote a memoir, *In Hiding*, published by the Azrieli Foundation.

She agreed to be the first Quebecer to participate in *Dimensions in Testimony*, when she realized her story preserved in this form will likely have more impact than a regular video or even a book after she dies.

“I thought it was a good thing to leave. People will see me as if I am still alive,” she said.

Marguerite is also the first French-speaker to participate in *Dimensions in Testimony* among the 27 survivors whose testimonies have been collected since 2014. The others are in English, Spanish, Hebrew, German, Russian, Swedish and Mandarin (one contributor is a survivor of the Nanjing Massacre).

The first participant in the project was a Canadian, Pinchas Gutter of Toronto, a Lodz native who survived six concentration camps. His virtual self premiered at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in 2015.

Marguerite’s recording will be housed in a custom-built room at the new MHM scheduled to open in 2025 on St. Laurent Boulevard. It will also be presented at Winnipeg’s Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which is a co-sponsor in the recording.

Marguerite’s testimony will be open to the public on the first two Sundays of the month, through to July.

Her recording is now in the development stage, and the public’s input on their experience with it will be helpful in making it the best it can be, said MHM communications head Sarah Fogg. The goal is to enable viewers to have as natural a “conversation” with the survivor as possible.

USC Shoah Foundation staff traveled to Montreal with a mobile rig to film her. It is quite a grueling procedure taking place over five days and involving answering more than 700 questions about her experience before, during and after the Holocaust.

Multiple cameras are used to produce a 3D image of the subject, while natural language processing maintains the realism of her speech.

Of course, the technology has its limitations; if questions are asked that are completely off the theme of the Holocaust, prompts will be given to get things back on track.

The producers try to present a well-rounded profile of the survivor as an individual and queries are not restricted to biographical facts, so that question about a favourite dessert might well be in the final version of her testimony.

Marguerite said she felt some trepidation lately hearing about the rise of artificial intelligence, but was reassured *Dimensions in Testimony* does not manipulate the words of subjects in any way or add any animation.

The MHM, which has a collection of over 870 survivors’ testimonies, is not looking for the time being to record another *Dimensions in Testimony* subject, said Fogg, because each recording is so costly and time-consuming.

“We are honoured to invite the public to take a behind-the-scenes look at the future of preserving survivor testimony,” stated MHM executive director Daniel Amar.

“The human connection replicated by an interactive biography will allow future generations to discover Marguerite’s story of loss and survival, but also her individuality and resilience. *Dimensions*

in *Testimony* enables visitors to comprehend the diversity, uniqueness and complexity of each survivor story.”

In August 1941, Marguerite’s father was deported to the Drancy transit camp near Paris and then to the Compiègne camp. From there he was transferred to Auschwitz where he was murdered in April 1942, which the family would not know until after liberation.

In the summer of 1942, Marguerite’s mother began looking for hiding places for herself and her two young daughters, but had to make the painful decision to release them to be sheltered apart from her.

In the spring of 1945, Marguerite and her sister reunited with their mother who had survived under a false identity in Lyon and together they returned to Paris.

In 1965 Marguerite married and two years later the couple immigrated to Canada. ■

Quebec’s first school guide to genocide education is now available in English after six years of work

/ Janice Arnold

Like the French version launched last year, *Studying Genocide* is only available online for now. It is the only material currently available covering 20th-century genocides, including the Holocaust, a subject that is not mandatory in Quebec schools.

Both versions are the fruit of many years of effort by Heidi Berger, the daughter of Holocaust survivors. She was appalled by the lack of knowledge of the Holocaust among Quebec high school students and inadequate materials for teachers who wanted to include the complex and sensitive subject of genocide in their curricula.

In 2014, Berger established the nonprofit Foundation for Genocide Education to rectify that, raising funds and lobbying government. Her ultimate goal is to see teaching the history of genocides compulsory in every school in North America, and she would be happy to see teachers everywhere download the guide.

Studying Genocide itself is the culmination over six years of work.

The English guide’s official release was held on April 27, as part of Genocide Awareness Month and can be found at education-genocide.ca. Teachers took part in an all-day training session on how to use the guide.

Financed by the Quebec education ministry, the guide was produced by professors Sabrina Moisan of the Université de Sherbrooke and Sivane Hirsch of the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières with the collaboration of the Foundation for Genocide Education, as well as the Montreal Holocaust Museum and other experts.

Input by the affected communities was integral to the development of the guide, the co-authors stressed.

Studying Genocide covers nine genocides of the 20th century, both their history and human rights legacy. The guide includes case stud-

ies and definitions of the six stages leading to genocide, as well as teaching plans, reference documentation, and instructional videos.

“It also examines the various genocides through testimony videos of survivors or children of survivors living in Canada today,” said Berger. “Reaction to the French version of the guide (which was available for the current school year) by educators has been overwhelmingly positive.”

The only formal reference to the Holocaust in the Quebec curriculum is in the contemporary world course in senior high school, and that course is optional.

Besides the Holocaust, the genocides presented in the guide include those of the Herero and Nama in Namibia, the Armenians under the Ottoman Empire, the Holodomor of the Ukrainians in the Soviet Union, the Roma and Sinti by the Nazis, the Muslims in Bosnia, the Tutsi in Rwanda, the victims of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and the First Nations of Canada.

Over 30 teachers took part in the April 27 training session, held at the Holocaust Museum and led by the guide’s co-authors. That was followed by a reception to celebrate the launch attended by representatives of the involved communities, among them PAGE Rwanda, the Armenian National Committee, and the Mohawk nation, and Georges Lemieux, director of the education ministry’s intercultural department.

Teachers who have used the guide testified to its value. Virginie Maltais described it as “very complete, very interesting and very enriching.”

“I was well supported from start to finish by the guide and the team of researchers. It was a wonderful experience that allowed my Secondary 4 and 5 students to better understand the process that leads to genocide, as well as the events related to the various genocides themselves.”

The Foundation for Genocide Education holds its annual fundraising gala on May 25 when the guest speaker will be Ahmed Obaid Al Mansoori, founder of the Crossroads of Civilization Museum in the United Arab Emirates, the only museum with a permanent exhibition on the Holocaust in the Arab world, on the subject “Building Communities: From Coexistence to Harmony.” ■

Obituary: Dr. Hy Goldman, 96, co-founder of KlezKanada, was a dedicated pediatrician and a tireless promoter of klezmer music

/ Janice Arnold

Hy Goldman, a physician who devoted what could have been a well-deserved retirement to the revitalization of klezmer music on a global scale, died May 19 in Montreal. He

was 96.

The word “tireless” hardly begins to convey how much time, energy and vision Goldman put into creating and sustaining KlezKanada, an annual weeklong retreat in the Laurentians celebrating traditional Eastern European Jewish music and culture. Since its modest beginning in 1996, the nonprofit KlezKanada has grown into an event that attracts hundreds of musicians, scholars and lovers of Yiddishkeit of all ages each summer.

The majority of participants come from outside Quebec, and KlezKanada evolved into what its artistic director Avia Moore described at Goldman’s funeral as an “international, inter-generational and inter-denominational movement”

Some call it a community; Goldman preferred to think of it as a family.

Some years ago, Goldman was determined to breach the “East-West” divide, and saw to it that artists from the former Soviet Union and Communist bloc, the birthplace of klezmer, came to KlezKanada.

He took special pride in a scholarship program that enables emerging artists from around the world—whatever their background—to attend KlezKanada and learn from some of the greatest klezmerim today.

In addition to the retreat every August at Camp B’nai Brith, KlezKanada expanded to include concerts and other activities in Montreal and online.

Goldman was 70 when KlezKanada was launched, and still maintaining a full-time medical practice at the Montreal Children’s Hospital (MCH). He and his wife Sandy ran KlezKanada themselves for most of its history, every year raising the money to keep it going.

They not only gave their time, but also personal resources.

KlezKanada finally hired its first executive director in 2018, but Goldman remained engaged in every aspect of its planning and an enthusiastic presence at the retreat.

In announcing his passing, the KlezKanada board stated, “One can’t describe or define KlezKanada without Hy Goldman, and one can’t describe or define Hy Goldman without KlezKanada.”

Montreal-born Goldman grew up in the old Jewish neighbourhood and attended fabled Baron Byng High School. He was among the generation who in later life reconnected with the Yiddish language their immigrant parents had spoken.

Although he could not play a note himself, Goldman was a life-long music lover, not only of klezmer, but also genres ranging from classical to Big Band to the country stylings of John Denver.

He, along with the late Sara Rosenfeld, director of Canadian Jewish Congress’s Yiddish committee, and Jack Wolofsky co-founded KlezKanada, hosting its first edition in 1996. As his son Ilan said at the funeral, there was considerable skepticism that the project would succeed; the klezmer revival was in its infancy.

Goldman’s capacity for work, both in his profession and on behalf of the community, was legendary. He regularly kept hours a person half his age would find exhausting.

In contrast to his zeal, Goldman was laconic, self-effacing and steadfast. Compared to his brother and sister, he was known as the serious, studious one, said Ilan.

Goldman’s specialty was endocrinology, specifically childhood diabetes. He was a pioneer in the isolation of pancreatic islet cells, establishing the first tissue culture lab at the MCH in the early 1970s. However, he was happiest working in the emergency department, and despite the stress that entailed, eagerly returned to the hospital each morning after late-night shifts.

He headed the MCH Council of Physicians for decades, and generations of interns appreciated him as a mentor.

Coming from a family of modest means during the Depression, Goldman might never have become a doctor if not for the Korean War. At 18 he went to New York and was drafted into the U.S. Army. After serving in the Korean conflict for two years, he entered medical school at the University of Illinois on the G.I. Bill and completed his education in Switzerland.

After starting his career in Cleveland, Goldman returned to Montreal in 1959 and joined the MCH staff where he would remain for more than 50 years. Reluctant to retire, at a still vigorous 81 he started a new job at the Tiny Tots clinic, finally hanging up his stethoscope at 91.

Goldman was past 40 when he married, and perhaps for that late blooming truly cherished family life. Friday night dinners were sacrosanct, even more so as grandchildren came along, they remembered at the funeral. Despite his demanding schedule, he was there for their games and piano recitals.

Material things were not important to Goldman, said Ilan, who remembered the decrepit cars his father got around in.

For many years Goldman was a regular at Congregation Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem and visited Israel numerous times. One of his wishes in his final days was that the entire family visit Israel together, said daughter Ronit.

Son Daveed credited his father with inspiring him to found in 2011 Choir! Choir! Choir! popular drop-in singalongs in Toronto.

Moore said fond memories have been received from around the world from those whose lives were impacted by Goldman and KlezKanada. Former executive director Sebastian Schulman said Goldman’s “powerful sense of vision and indomitable will made things happen.”

Two former KlezKanada artistic directors, leading American klezmer musicians, Jeff Warschauer and Frank London, performed at the funeral.

In 2016, Hy and Sandy were awarded the Governor General’s Meritorious Service Medal in recognition of their leadership of an arts festival that over two decades had “grown and gained international stature.”

Friends and longtime KlezKanada supporters Sara and Irwin Tauben noted, “At an age when most men might have retired to the golf course or happily taken up a hobby, Hy not only continued his duties as a doctor, but began to seriously pursue his interest in Jewish music.

“He could have simply learned to play an instrument, focusing on klezmer tunes. Instead, he made it possible for thousands to learn to play multiple Jewish musical traditions while deepening their understanding of Jewish history, culture and folkways. He directly impacted four generations, while KlezKanada continues to inspire and motivate participants from around the world.” ■

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Obituary: Dr. Avinoam Chernick, 88, a pioneering obstetrician, dedicated to fighting for women's rights

/ Alex Rose

Dr. Avinoam Chernick, a pioneering obstetrician gynecologist and sex and relationship therapist, died May 8 in London, Ont. He was 88.

Chernick, who went by Noam, fought for women's rights his entire life. In the 1990s he was one of a handful of doctors in London who would perform abortions, which led to both his family home and clinic being targeted.

"The crazies came out and we were picketed, our house was picketed, every day for over a year. About 20 people, one hour, every day. Can you imagine what you could do with the person power of that, to do something good in the world?" said Chernick's wife, Dr. Beryl Chernick, who was also his partner in his medical and therapy practices.

In the mid-1990s, multiple doctors who performed abortions in the United States and Canada were shot—including one, Barnett Slepian of Buffalo, N.Y., who was killed in his home by a sniper. As a result, Chernick made sure to take extreme caution to protect himself and his family from a similar fate.

"Before it was dark, all the blinds would go down, everything would be closed up. Noam was excessively careful in trying to make sure that things were safe around the house. It was a horrible thing," said Beryl.

Eventually, however, the clinics that were being targeted pushed for an injunction against the protesters, so they couldn't picket within 500 metres of the doctors' homes. Once the injunction came down and forced the picketers to the end of the block, the protests stopped, and the Chernicks no longer had to live in fear. However, according to Beryl, they had already taken a toll on Chernick, as she believes his eventual heart issues stemmed at least in part from the stress of the situation.

Chernick also championed many other causes related to sexual and reproductive issues, including contraception, menopause, and the right for fathers to be present in the delivery room for the birth of their child. Perhaps most notably, he co-founded the Sexual Assault Examination Centre at St. Joseph's Hospital in London, along with Dr. William Hyndman.

Together, they coordinated experts from the fields of policing, medicine, and social work to make sure the experience of victims was both as compassionate and effective as possible. Chernick also arranged funding for and created a video teaching new staff members how to help their patients and collect the necessary samples with respect and care.

Chernick's eldest daughter, Elisheva, recognized the characteristic trait that defined her father's approach to his practice. Her father "was doing patient-centred care when nobody even

used the term yet. He was ahead of his time," Beryl said.

Chernick was born in 1935 in what was then the British Mandate of Palestine, to Sarah and Alec Chernick. His parents had attended the same high school in Winnipeg, but they only met in Palestine in 1933. Chernick's sister Lili was born shortly after him, and then the whole family moved back to Winnipeg in 1940 for a short time.

They soon moved to Toronto because Chernick's father got a job with the Toronto Transit Commission. He was an engineer who both helped build the sea wall in Tel Aviv and designed the Union Station curve at the south end of Toronto's main subway line.

In high school, Chernick was the president of the Oakwood Collegiate orchestra, in which he played the flute, and was also a member of the school's award-winning a cappella choir. The flute remained his love, an instrument he played up until two weeks before his death, his obituary noted.

Chernick and Beryl first met at Camp Massad in Muskoka in the summer of 1953. They got married in 1958, when they were both attending the University of Western Ontario in Beryl's hometown of London. After graduating, they spent six months in Winston-Salem, N.C. where they studied relationships, and a year in Philadelphia, where they studied sexual medicine. Eventually they moved back to London, where they found their services were in high demand.

"We came back, and we were flooded with patients, absolutely. All our colleagues just were waiting to send people to us," said Beryl. "Patients were being referred to us a lot, they were just waiting [to see us]."

From there, the Chernicks soon got invited to speak about their area of expertise. They gave presentations to university and medical departments, to classes, and to public audiences. They also published scientific articles together and made relationship therapy films. The couple were considered trailblazers at the time, willing to speak about and support issues that they believed were important but were frozen out of polite discourse.

"Certainly, at that time, people were not aware. People were very anxious," said Beryl. "We debunked a lot of the anxiety-provoking myths about sexuality. Our speaking and teaching, we regarded it as the preventive medicine aspect of our work, to help people feel comfortable with who they were, what they were doing, and how they were doing it."

Outside of a professional context, Chernick was known for his love of music, his sense of humour, and his love of children.

"As a father, he was great. Supportive of his kids in every way," said Beryl. "He took each of his kids to the hospital. Each of them served as his 'resident.' They might be six years old, but he told the nurses, I'm bringing my resident in with me. And he would leave them to look at the babies in the nursery."

The Chernicks have been a staple at Congregation Or Shalom in London for years. Rabbi Catharine Clark, who has worked there since 2012, said Chernick was known for the joy he brought to the community, especially in his role as a *gabbai*.

"He was so knowledgeable, so committed to the congregation and to Judaism," she said. "I'm going to miss him; he was a good person. He was a pillar of our community. It's not going to be the same without him."

Chernick is survived by his wife Beryl; daughters Elisheva, Yonina, and Aviva; his sister Lili and his grandchildren. ■