

[View this in your browser.](#)



Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES)

Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1, July 2021



From the Chair

Devastating Events Deplored

Recent tragedies have brought sorrow to all Canadians

The Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES) shares the Indigenous community's grief and anger at the heartbreaking discovery of the remains of 215 children, some only three years old, at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School near Kamloops, British Columbia. The discovery is a stark reminder to all Canadians of the bitter legacy of the residential school experience.

We abhor the vicious and deadly attack on an innocent Muslim family in London, Ontario, struck down while enjoying an evening stroll. The attack not only destroyed a family; it has left Canada's Muslim community terrorized and afraid. Islamophobia, and any extreme racist manifestation, has no place in Canada.

And now, at the deadline for this newsletter, comes more terrible news. The Cowessess First Nation in Saskatchewan reported the finding of 751 unmarked graves at the site of the former Marieval Indian Residential School. Details of the life and death of some of the Indigenous children forced to attend the school are found in the reports issued by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC), which can be found [online](#).

As an organization dedicated to combating antisemitism, prejudice, and racism in all its forms and promoting respect for diversity, social justice, and human rights, CHES respectfully mourns these tragedies.

CHES On The Move!

Since January 2021, CHES has been operating independently as a registered charity. The enthusiastic CHES team is committed to the establishment of a permanent home in the nation's capital.

As always, CHES is dedicated to addressing the pressing challenges presented by growing antisemitism, Holocaust deniers, and those who distort the true nature of the Holocaust. Our themes, our focus on education, and our programming will not change. We will continue our collaboration with the Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies (see our [thank you letter](#)) as well as other organizations on a variety of Holocaust Education programs.

Our new website (www.chesatottawa.ca) contains all the work of CHES since our inception in 2015.

We welcome seven new members, who bring a wealth of experience to CHES. New member Joel Diener has been honoured with the Shem Tov Community Award, presented by the Jewish Federation of Ottawa. Congratulations, Joel!

We are delighted to announce that CHES is the recipient of a Beth Shalom Legacy Grant and thank the Beth Shalom Legacy Fund Committee for selecting us. We appreciate this recognition of our work, in particular because it ensures that our new program – *An In-Depth Exploration of the Voices of Survivors* – can become a reality.

To help us meet the growing demand for our programs, CHES is launching a fund-raising campaign. Please make an online donation or contact us through the links at the end of the newsletter. As we transition into independence and continue to grow, your support is vital and appreciated.

Mina Cohn

Education Initiatives

CHES strives to create better tools, strategies, and resources for educators within the Ottawa Boards of Education to teach and explore the lessons of the Holocaust.

Adhering to COVID-19 restrictions on in-person gatherings, we will work with survivors and their descendants to develop Zoom presentations for schools.

We will continue to advocate and urge the Government of Canada to augment its previous investments in Holocaust education.

Our Initial Activities

January 26th: CHES organized the virtual [Annual Ottawa International Holocaust Remembrance](#) event in collaboration with Library and Archives Canada, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, and the Ottawa Jewish Federation. Over 1000 people joined this presentation, which focused on the work of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), with a special emphasis on Antisemitism, Holocaust Denial, and Distortion.

The complete video of the event is posted on our website and can be viewed by clicking on the image below.



March 7th: CHES participated in a virtual, cross-Canada symposium for teachers led by Liberation 75. The CHES contribution was entitled [*Inspiring and Empowering Youth Through Holocaust Education*](#) and was developed by CHES member Kenra Mroz, an English, Writer's Craft, and Special Education teacher at Sir Robert Borden High School in Ottawa.

Her program focused on how to use the Holocaust history and legacy for encouraging students to openly "voice" their thoughts and opinions in the classroom. It discussed methods for creating 'safe spaces' for students to explore emotionally challenging topics, such as fighting prejudice. Teaching resources included Kenra's collection of monologues entitled *In Memory of Those for Whom We Search*, and teaching strategies based on the work of Janusz Korczak, an inspirational educator who championed the idea of youth empowerment.

March 14th: A Zoom meeting was held with local Holocaust survivors to explain CHES' new status. Items on the agenda included a brief presentation by Rabbi Idan Scher of Machzikei Hadas Congregation about the Ottawa-area COVID vaccination program and the screening of *Voices for the Past, the Present, and the Future*, a film about the establishment of CHES.

March 24th: CHES cooperated with the Canadian War Museum on the virtual opening of [*Anne Frank: A History for Today*](#), a travelling exhibition marking the 76th anniversary of her death. The exhibition examines her life against the backdrop of historical events before and during World War II.

April 7th: Tova Clark, a child survivor from Germany and a member of the CHES Speakers' Bureau, participated in a Zikaron Basalon (Memories in the Living Room) program hosted by the Embassy of Israel with 32 embassies represented. Zikaron Basalon events bring people together in homes, workplaces, and other intimate environments to speak with survivors and consist of three elements: the survivor's story, a cultural component, and a conversation.

April 8th: Working with the Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, Jewish communities, and Holocaust institutions and federations from across Canada, CHES contributed to the creation of a virtual, cross-Canada Yom Ha'shoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) commemoration. Special guests, poignant readings, and survivor testimony honoured the victims of the Shoah and paid tribute to Canada's diverse community of Holocaust survivors.



April 9th: A Zikaron Basalon event for 38 participants from the Communications Security Establishment featured Kati Morrison, a Holocaust survivor from Hungary and a member of the CHES Speakers' Bureau. The cultural component included CHES member Hilda Bleyer presenting the poem, *Shema*, by Primo Levi, and Joel Yan singing *Eli Eli* by Hanna Szenes, a poem she wrote after learning of the fate of Europe's Jews during the Holocaust.

We Must Be Vigilant

CHES notes with alarm the attacks against Jewish people across Canada following the May war between Israel and the Gaza Strip. As Michael Levitt, president and CEO of the Toronto-based Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies wrote recently: "I watched in dismay and disbelief as anti-Israel protests in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal degenerated into ugly scenes of loathing ([One-sided media coverage is helping fuel antisemitism in Canada - The Star](#))." History teaches us that we must stand up against such manifestations of hate. It is our responsibility as Jews across the country to confront any and all displays of hatred through education and activism.

Coming Up

New initiatives include creating a *Virtual Memorial for Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants* who have made Canada their home. In recognition of the importance of the *project*, an anonymous

donor has agreed to match all donations to the Virtual Memorial Fund up to \$2000. To support this fund, click on the donation button below or [contact us](#).

Also underway is the *In-Depth Exploration of the Voices of Survivors*, designed to help educators further explore the [Ottawa Survivor Testimonials](#) recorded by CHES in 2016.



CHES is working with the Embassy of Austria on an exhibit entitled *For the Child*, about the Kindertransport, the organized rescue effort of nearly 10,000 predominantly Jewish children that took place during the nine months prior to the outbreak of World War II. The exhibit is scheduled to open in the fall of 2022.

CHES has recently added its voice to the [Maspik Coalition](#), which seeks to bring the best minds together to foster creative and innovative approaches to combating the scourge of antisemitism in Canada.

Planning has begun for Holocaust Education Month, our major annual public event, to be held in November 2021 and for which CHES is developing partnerships with organizations within the National Capital Region and across the country.

Editor: Sheila Hurtig Robertson



Contact

Email: info@chesatottawa.ca

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CHESATOTTAWA

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/chesatottawa>

Website: www.chesatottawa.ca

**Visit our website at
www.chesatottawa.ca**

**Connect with us on Social
Media:**



If you do not wish to receive further emails from CHES, click on [Unsubscribe](#).
Copyright © 2021 Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship. All rights reserved.