



Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship *(CHES)*

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Words from Chair Mina Cohn

A year ago, CHES was preparing to become an independent charity, a process that demanded attention and learning. Looking back, 2021 has been characterized by hard work, much satisfaction, and tremendous achievements and growth.

The year started with an outstanding virtual program on January 27th, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which focused on the dangers of Holocaust denial and distortion. In November, Holocaust Education Month (HEM) featured three exceptional virtual programs that attracted a record participation of over 2500 people.

The programs were recorded and are available on the [CHES website](#) and include the special message from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Detailed information about the events can be found below.

A sincere thank you to Jessica Perreault and her team at SidePony Marketing for providing excellent and professional support and for making everything look effortless during HEM. Thanks also to Abigail Bimman, a CHES director and our outstanding emcee.

In addition to developing education programs and establishing connections with new partners, the CHES team devoted much time to applying for grants and creating a viable fundraising drive that culminated with remarkable results during the CHES Giving Tuesday campaign.

CHES thanks all its sponsors, donors, partners, and grant providers. With your ongoing support and contributions, CHES will meet the growing demand for its programs and will be prepared to continue to fight the alarming rise in antisemitism.

As our attention turns to 2022, CHES intends to hire an executive director to manage its day-to-day activities and to support the work of our dedicated team of volunteers. For more information, contact CHES: info@chesatottawa.ca.

The year promises to be full of new ideas and exciting projects, including:

- ***Educating the Educators***, a program in collaboration with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) to help prepare educators to address the challenging and sensitive topic of antisemitism. The program will highlight the connection between antisemitism and all forms of discrimination, both historical and current.
- ***A Virtual Memorial for Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants***, which will be a lasting tribute and a much-needed resource for research and the fight against antisemitism.
- ***Last Chance Testimony of the Shoah Foundation***, which will seek survivors whose testimony is not yet recorded and provide the opportunity to document it.
- ***An Educational iWalk through the National Holocaust Monument***, together with our partners Liberation 75 and the Shoah Foundation, a project to enhance the educational experience of visitors to the National Holocaust Memorial in Ottawa.
- ***For the Child***, an exhibit about the Kindertransport in collaboration with the Embassy of Austria and the British High Commission.

As a follow-up to the National Summit on Antisemitism last July, CHES was invited to participate in a meeting that engaged community leaders from diverse Jewish communities across Canada. The purpose was to discuss ways in which Public Safety Canada's Security Infrastructure Program can better address the needs of Jewish communities across Canada that may be at risk of hate-motivated crime.

Suggestions included simplifying the application form for grant applications; allowing larger community organizations to act on behalf of smaller organizations in their community to access funding; ideas for communities to better work nationally with the police; and addressing vandalism and online hate that have a strong psychological affect on young children, students, and community members.

Signs of Our Times, Current Antisemitism

During the Teachers Workshop, CHES learned that a group of 60 Jewish teachers in the OCDSB formed a group to support each other in the fight against antisemitism in the schools. A support network to provide a “safe space” for Ottawa Jewish government employees was also formed to help members share experiences of anti-Semitism and to change the culture in this sector. [Click here to read the article in the National Post.](#)

CHES is pleased that there is an awakening among Jewish people to fight for recognition of their rights for a safe space free of antisemitism at their workplace. Kudos to the organizers!

In a recent interview, Professor Irwin Cotler said: “Antisemitism is the oldest, most enduring, most virulent, most sophisticated and lethal of hatreds.” He has set out an ambitious, 10-point plan that includes fighting Holocaust denial and distortion, expanding and improving Holocaust education, and working with all levels of government to combat hate crimes.

Cotler stressed that ministers in the [new cabinet](#) (sworn in on October 26, 2021) will be tasked with being engaged with his special envoy role, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and the Minister of National Security. [Click here to read the article in The Times of Israel.](#)

On behalf of CHES, I wish a Happy and Safe Holiday
to all our friends who celebrate Christmas.

Happy New Year
2022

CHES is collaborating with Liberation 75 and the Shoah Foundation on the Last Chance Collection, a race-against-the-clock, and a final push to record interviews of Holocaust survivors.

We are seeking Holocaust survivors who are Canadians and live in Ottawa, and whose testimonies were not recorded.

No Cost! No Travel! Any language, remote or in person.
If you know of someone or to participate, please contact us at
info@chesatottawa.ca.

Saul Rubinek Launch Event a Resounding Success

By Benita Siemiatycki



On November 9th, CHES hosted its inaugural 2021 Holocaust Education Month (HEM) event with a presentation entitled “*All in the Telling*” by the acclaimed Canadian actor, writer, and filmmaker Saul Rubinek. Speaking virtually from his home in Los Angeles, Rubinek presented a moving portrayal of his survivor parents, Frania and Israel, and his own experiences growing up in Ottawa as the child of Holocaust survivors.

The event, which drew over 1,000 registrants from across Canada and the United States, opened with remarks from CHES Chair Mina Cohn, who welcomed viewers and emphasized the importance of Holocaust education in light of a world-wide resurgence of antisemitism.

This theme was echoed by all the speakers: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau; Honourable Irwin Cotler, founder and chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights and Canada’s Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Anti-Semitism; Mayor Jim Watson; and the Embassy of Israel through a message delivered by emcee Abigail Bimman.

[Read more ...](#)

Helen Epstein's Journey to Understanding Historical Trauma and the 2nd Gen

By Sheila Hurtig Robertson



A highlight of Holocaust Education was the virtual presentation by renowned author Helen Epstein entitled *The Shadow of the Holocaust on the Lives of Children and Survivors: Is it Possible to Move Beyond its Grip?*

Setting the stage for her remarks was Chaim Katz, a PhD student at the University of Toronto and a grandson of survivors. He described the experiences of himself and his peers and their frustrations in coping with the antisemitism of student groups who sponsor anti-Israel events. Katz, who is involved in many aspects of student life on campus, said: "I know what antisemitism can lead to if ignored; we must learn from the past or else we are doomed to repeat it."

Helen Epstein's presentation was an intensely personal account of her life and that of her parents, Kurt Epstein and Franci Rabinek Solar, both Holocaust survivors and the sole survivors of their families. The 'shadow' of the Holocaust has been with me all my life," she said, adding that she saw the Auschwitz tattoo on her mother's forearm from the moment of her birth. "The tattoo disturbed me so profoundly that for a very long time, I could not remember its numbers."

Both parents had met years before when Franci, born in 1920, was a 13-year-old and Kurt was her 29-year-old swim coach. Not yet a couple, both were caught up in the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and both survived internment in Terezin concentration camp, Auschwitz, and slave labour camps. After liberation they returned to Prague where, in June 1946, they ran into each other. Franci was a widowed, 26-year-old fashion designer and Kurt, then 41, was a two-time Olympian in water polo and a bachelor. Twenty-four hours after their first date, they moved in together. Helen was born in November 1947.

[Read more ...](#)

A Memorable Teachers' Workshop

By Marion Silver



The theme of the 2021 Teachers' Workshop was "*Voices of the Holocaust Inspiring Change Through Legacy*". On November 24th, the 40+ virtual participants were treated to opening remarks by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who addressed the need for solidarity and commitment in the ongoing fight against the rising tide of antisemitism and hate. CHES chair Mina Cohn echoed these remarks as she reiterated CHES' mandate to teach the lessons and legacy of the Holocaust.

Educator Kenra Mroz' moving rendition of the poem X-Rated underlined the context in which Jews found themselves in prewar Germany. She then gave many practical suggestions as to how teachers can prepare and deliver the history and lessons of the Holocaust. It is important to recognize that the subject matter can trigger great feelings of discomfort among students who themselves may have experienced abuse, bullying, or racial discrimination.

[Read more ...](#)

Letters

From Fran Freedman-Kesler:

It was a privilege to attend the CHES program, Opening Night in Commemoration of Kristallnacht. Saul Rubinek's stories, in the voices of his parents, were both powerful and moving. I was struck that Saul would not give advice when responding to questions, but reminded the listening audience that we are all perpetrators, victims, and heroes at different times. That too was a strong message.

My sincere thanks to the CHES committee for the work they do every year to present meaningful and inspiring programs. To show my appreciation, I made a donation last week.

From Dr. Ruth Samuel Tenenholz, Haifa, Israel:

I greatly enjoyed the webinar in spite of the ridiculous hour for me here in Haifa. Everything was meaningful. Chaim spoke so eloquently, and I identified with much of what he said. Bernie, Farber, your final speaker, moved me to tears. I am a great admirer of Helen Epstein and will now reread some of her books. She is eloquent and comes through the screen as if she is right there with you. I wish her health and wonderful things.

[Read more...](#)

From Peppy Margolis:

I was pleased to attend the Zoom presentation about how trauma has affected the 2nd Gen. My turbulent childhood was similar to Helen's, especially my father's rage and anger. Reading Helen's book, *Children of The Holocaust*, helped me to cope and manage living with traumatized parents. I was active in the 2ND Gen movement and attended the early programs in New York City. I chaired a NJ conference at Kean University in 1990.

I studied about the affects of the Holocaust on our traumatized parents who had post-traumatic stress. It was my conclusion that these attitudes and behaviours influenced children of survivors. I produced a film, "The 2nd Gen- Ripples from The Holocaust," about ten 2nd Gen who were members of my Raritan Valley Community College Holocaust Institute of the RVCC community of Central Jersey. This film confirmed my findings and helped many 2nd Gen groups explore their feelings and experiences as 2nd Gen.

[Read more...](#)

From Barbara Dresner, Manchester, UK:

I gather information about events of interest for members of the 2nd Gen and 3rd Gen members of the 2nd Gen Network in the UK: www.secondgeneration.org.uk. Our newsletter is published three times a year - the next one comes out in January. I could get your links into the newsletter and/or our online notices via Mailchimp and/or our website.

The main problem for our members in watching your events live is: we're 5 hours ahead of you!! 'Night-owls' like me manage - but many aren't! -

From Rae McDonald, Limestone District School Board:

Hi Mina, thank you very much for sharing this information. I attended the session and really found the workshop and discussions involved very powerful. I have added this information to our LDSB resource bank, and look forward to our continued collaboration.

Editor: Sheila Hurtig Robertson

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