

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

ZACHOR

WINTER 2015

*WHAT I LEARNED
AS THE CHILD
OF HOLOCAUST
SURVIVORS*

BY JEANNE BEKER

MEMORY, TESTIMONY,
AND TEXT IN
HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

INTERNATIONAL
HOLOCAUST
REMEMBRANCE DAY



VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

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ZACHOR | Remember

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Dear Readers,

I write this letter from Manchester, England, where I am attending the meetings of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) as a member of the Canadian delegation. IHRA is an intergovernmental body whose purpose is to place political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance and research both nationally and internationally.

My nomination as incoming Chair of the Memorials and Museums Working Group was approved at the IHRA Plenary Session in Manchester, and I am honoured and humbled to represent Canada and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre in this role.

The Memorials and Museums Working Group brings together experts from across member countries to discuss forms of cultural remembrance that seek to anchor the Holocaust in the collective memory of contemporary and future societies. Particular attention is given to memorials at historic sites of the Holocaust, memorial museums as cultural sites of memory and remembrance, and the implementation of national Holocaust remembrance days.

IHRA has an annually rotating Chairmanship, which will be assumed by Hungary in March 2015. Against a backdrop of rising antisemitism in Europe, the significance of IHRA's mandate is unmistakable.

The VHEC is an active contributor to this international dialogue, and is the beneficiary of the exchange of best practices fostered by Canada's IHRA membership. This issue of *Zachor* addresses topics informed by developments in Holocaust commemoration and representation 70 years after the liberation of Auschwitz.

To mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Centre will present a documentary film screening of *Numbered*. Robbie Waisman, whose remarkable contributions as a VHEC Outreach Speaker are highlighted in two articles in this issue, will offer reflections about liberation at the January 25th program.

The VHEC's 9th Biennial Shafran Teachers' Conference, themed on *Memory, Testimony and Text in Holocaust Education*, promises to offer educators a rich selection of keynote speakers and workshops. The conference will kick off with a public talk by fashion industry icon Jeanne Beker for the West Coast launch of her parents' memoir, *Joy Runs Deeper*, published by the Azrieli Foundation's Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program.

The theme of the transmission of Holocaust memory is carried through this issue with a book review of *The Era of the Witness* and a feature on a new national site of remembrance in Ottawa.

The Stockholm Declaration, the founding document of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, states: "With humanity still scarred by genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils. Together we must uphold the terrible truth of the Holocaust against those who deny it. We must strengthen the moral commitment of our people, ... to ensure that future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences." Through its mission to promote Holocaust education and remembrance, the VHEC contributes to Canada's commitment to these principles.

Best regards,



Nina Krieger
VHEC Executive Director

WHAT I LEARNED AS THE CHILD OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

BY JEANNE BEKER



LEFT: Bronia and Joseph Beker with daughters Marilyn and Jeanne, 1950s. RIGHT: Bronia and Joseph Beker. Courtesy Azrieli Series of Holocaust Memoirs: *Joy Runs Deeper*.

Some survivors of the Holocaust choose never to speak of the horrors they endured. My parents talked. They were adamant about telling us every detail of their war experience, time and time again. I remember hiding under the bed as a small child — I didn't want to hear any more of their "war stories." Now I realize it was precisely their storytelling that made me who I am, colouring my personal philosophies, imparting a sense of resiliency and instilling in me a precious instinct for survival.

What they endured and all they have given me has been on my mind a great deal over Toronto's Holocaust Education Week, with the recent publication of their memoirs, *Joy Runs Deeper*. With the last generation of eyewitnesses to the Holocaust slowly slipping away, my parents' stories have taken on more value and urgency. As a child of survivors, I'm keenly aware that I have been left with a legacy that's as powerfully daunting as it is inspiring.

My parents, Bronia and Joseph Beker, both grew up in Kozowa — a small town in eastern Poland that is now part

of Ukraine. They paint a colourful prewar picture of life in their idyllic *shtetl*, where they met and fell in love. But when Germany invaded Poland in 1939, their lives became a living hell. By 1941, all the Kozowa Jews were confined to a ghetto. Nazis would regularly come into town and randomly shoot any Jew in sight.

After these horrific shootings, the Germans would command the Jews to make their ghetto even smaller. Many people lived in one room, and with little food, people grew weak and prone to disease. My grandmother and mother both came down with typhus, and it killed my grandmother. In the meantime, my grandfather built a bunker in the basement of the family home where they would hide whenever the Nazis came to town.

In April 1943, my mother and nine members of her family went down to their bunker. After about six hours, they could hear digging: The Nazis were looking for them.

"We held our breath and didn't move for about half an hour,"

writes my mother. “They left without finding our bunker, but the pipes through which we got air must have been covered during their digging. We couldn’t breathe,” she recalls.

“I remember seeing my father, sitting on the floor in his prayer shawl, praying, and my brother with a hammer in his hand, trying to open the entrance to the bunker. Then I fell down and everything went black.”

My mom’s entire family perished that day: All of them suffocated, except, miraculously, for her. Like a knight in shining armour, my dad came to her rescue, scooped her up, and for many months until their liberation, my parents were on the run, hiding in barns and bunkers, depending on the kindness of strangers for their very existence.

It was these stories of survival that were relentlessly recounted to my sister and me throughout our childhood. “Don’t be afraid and never give up” was my father’s famous saying, the mindset that saw him through the war, and the sage edict he raised us on.

My mother’s *modus operandi*, which tended to chip away any potential optimism, was even more pragmatic: “Expect the worst and you won’t be disappointed.” It certainly wasn’t an upbeat way of viewing the world, but it was her motherly attempt at protecting us and sparing us pain.

While my mother’s influence certainly affects me even to this day, it was my father’s motto that I especially took to heart — an order that still carries me through all my trials.

Ultimately, both my parents taught me the meaning of fearlessness and tenacity, courage and dignity.

As my mother always says, “If you live long enough, you’ll live to see everything.” And her words rang true as I sat by her side at her book launch, watching in wonder as she proudly signed countless books bearing her name. On the verge of turning 94, suffering the ravages of Parkinson’s, but as radiant and stylish as ever, my mom was realizing one of her greatest dreams: She could now share her personal story with the world.

Her memoir, which she’d written more than 30 years ago, along with my father’s memoir, which he’d written, longhand, in Yiddish, just before he died in 1988, has been



Bronia and Joseph Beker. Courtesy Azrieli Series of Holocaust Memoirs: Joy Runs Deeper.

published by the Azrieli Foundation’s Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program.

Established in 1989 by the late Montreal philanthropist David J. Azrieli, himself a Holocaust survivor, this Canadian organization collects, archives and publishes inspirational accounts of courage and strength in the light of horrifying adversity, and distributes them free of charge to libraries and educational institutions across the country. (The books are also available at bookstores, with all revenues going back into this extraordinary memoirs program.)

My mother and so many others had their youth nipped in the bud, endured unspeakable pain and suffered profound loss. Yet still, they managed to soldier on, pick up the broken pieces and stoically rebuild their shattered lives.

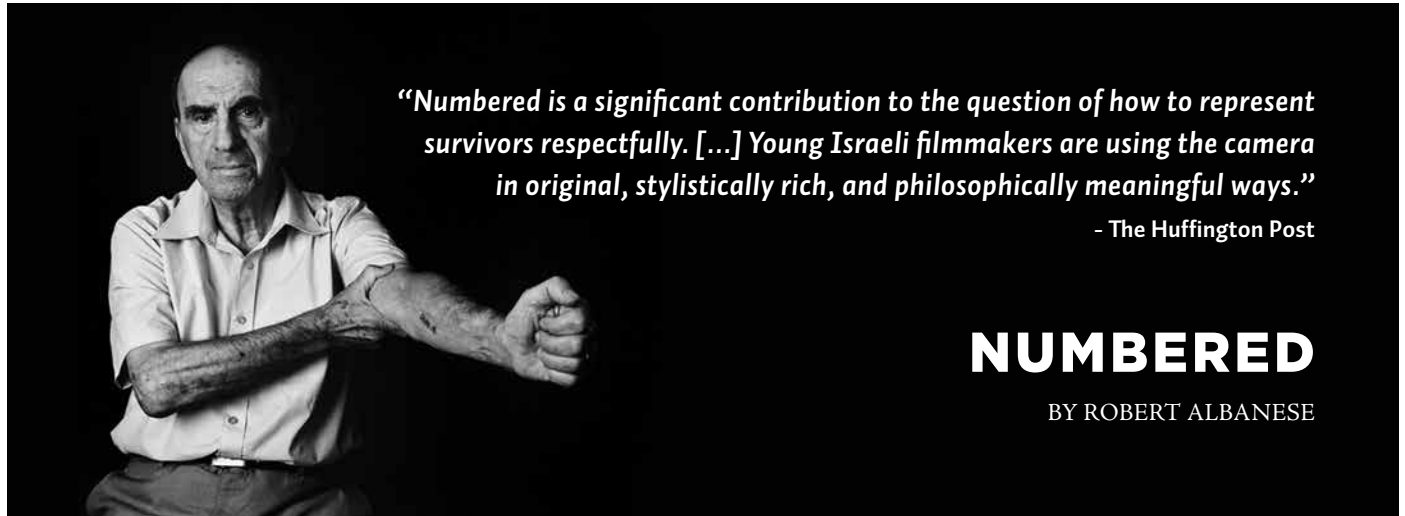
Their tales of toughness and tenacity light our paths, and teach us the kind of fearlessness it takes to survive. These lessons learned from survivors, like my parents, inspire and challenge us to shoot for the moon, work hard, be successful and live out not just our dreams, but their unrealized ones as well.

Their heroism drives me relentlessly.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Jeanne Beker is a Canadian television personality, fashion designer, author and newspaper columnist.



“Numbered is a significant contribution to the question of how to represent survivors respectfully. [...] Young Israeli filmmakers are using the camera in original, stylistically rich, and philosophically meaningful ways.”

- The Huffington Post

NUMBERED

BY ROBERT ALBANESE

Numbered is a visually stunning, compelling film filled with stories of survivors told with surprising humor and wit. Edited into an impactful whole, the film artfully reminds us that the survivors past reverberates on for the next generations. This very compelling film clearly demonstrates the importance of documenting the collective story of the Holocaust.

Viewers are challenged to see the Shoah through the lens of Uriel Sinai from vantage points that are novel and compelling; a survivor who defiantly adopts his number for all computer-based security codes, a “next generationer” who enters a tattoo parlour to perpetuate her father’s number on her skin, entire families who decide to “move on,” and some who don’t.

Dr. Doron, the film’s script writer, is a doctor and former president of the prestigious San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. While doing her residency as an intern, she had been paged to evaluate an 83-year-old woman in the emergency room. The stated complaint was chest pain but it didn’t take long for Dr. Doron, an astute clinician, to understand that this symptom was really not what brought this patient to the hospital. In truth, the patient was a frequent visitor to the ER where she sought people to hear her story. The woman was an Auschwitz survivor and had come because she was lonely and pined for an audience.

Dr. Doron concluded that there must be others with a similar sense of isolation. She set out to identify other survivors; most of whom learned not only to live with the



fact that they were indelibly branded like cattle but also found a way to be empowered by this form of physical and mental torture. The film works because the stories are jarring and yet very touching. The photographs taken from the initial gathering of survivors for the project and used throughout the film are arrestingly beautiful.

The Vancouver Jewish Film Centre is proud to co-sponsor the presentation of this important film with the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre on the occasion of the 2015 International Holocaust Memorial Day and the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.



Robert Albanese is the Artistic and Executive Director of the Vancouver Jewish Film Centre, which is home to the Vancouver Jewish Film Festival and host of numerous outreach film programs in Vancouver.

MEMOIR, TESTIMONY AND TEXT IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

BY ADARA GOLDBERG

On February 20, 2015, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre will welcome classroom teachers, university professors, and museum professionals from across the region to the 9th Biennial Shafran Teachers' Conference. Launched in 1999 to provide a forum for British Columbian educators to share and develop best-practice strategies, this day-long program offers participants an opportunity to engage with internationally renowned scholars and educators at the forefront of Holocaust studies.

As we move further away from the events of the Holocaust and there are fewer survivors available to share their eyewitness accounts to students and teachers, mediated engagement with survivor testimony, memoirs and primary source documents are assuming increasingly prominent roles in Holocaust education. This year's conference, *Memoir, Testimony and Text*, demonstrates the cross-curricular teaching potential of integrating early postwar documentation and eyewitness testimony into teaching about the Holocaust and other genocides.

The program opens with keynote addresses from two leaders in pedagogy and research: Professor Peter Seixas of the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, University of British Columbia, and Dr. Diane Afoumado of the International Tracing Service (ITS) Research Branch, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Professor Seixas' talk, "History, Memory and the Holocaust", examines new trends in Holocaust education. "While these have always been important in Holocaust education," Seixas asserts, "it is a particularly appropriate moment to consider the various contributions and limitations of a variety of sources [including written memoir, filmed testimony, and scholarly analysis]. Moreover, students themselves should be directly and explicitly grappling with those contributions and limitations. Two conceptual tools might help them do

so: the notion of *historical distance*, and the spectrum of historical vs. memorial ways of dealing with the past."

In "Documenting the Holocaust: Insights from the International Tracing Service," Dr. Diane Afoumado introduces educators to the International Tracing Service archive (ITS). Located in Bad Arolsen, Germany, the ITS was established by the Allied powers after the Second World War for the purpose of reuniting families and tracing missing relatives, and contains millions of pages of documentation. Afoumado's keynote address highlights the potential of researchers and educators, 'detectives of the past,' in reconstructing human stories from the Holocaust through primary sources. "Researchers and



Identification card and immigration documentation belonging to Maier Lieberman. International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany. Courtesy of the Lieberman family.

educators rarely see archival documents looking at the ITS materials; rather, we see people and their stories," Afoumado remarks. "You start with very little most of the time, and you are able to connect the dots, to tell parts of someone's story."

Conference attendees will select from three concurrent workshops designed to provide innovative, practical strategies for engaging with the history and present-day

(continued on page 8)

REVISITING FAMILY CONNECTIONS FROM A DIFFERENT TIME AND PLACE

BY CELIA BRAUER

I never cease to be amazed by the connection made one day in June 2013. After a Yiddish reading group I started a conversation with Rachel Mines, who I knew from the Second Generation Group. She mentioned she would visit Libau, Latvia that summer. That stopped me in my tracks. “Why are you going to Libau?” I asked. “My mother was from Libau,” she responded. Once more I was stunned. The Germans had been very efficient in Libau and only 1% of the Jews survived so I never met anyone who had roots there. “My father was from Libau,” I replied slowly. Rachel didn’t miss a beat. “What is his name?” she asked. “Mendel Brauer,” I answered. Rachel continued, “I remember that name for some reason...”

That night Rachel checked her records and discovered that my father had given witness testimony in a Montreal court so her mother could receive reparations. My father and Rachel’s mother spent the war together. From my father’s testimony I discovered parts of his story I didn’t know existed. He and Rachel’s mother had been in the Libau ghetto together and were then taken to Kaiserwald Camp near Riga where they worked on the German railway. Their slave labour continued in Stutthof concentration camp in Poland. Somehow both survived these ordeals and immigrated to Canada after the war.

Our parents had a connection from many decades before in a very different time. The coincidence of Rachel and me meeting by chance so many years later was nothing short of miraculous.

I had never gone to see Latvia or Poland where my mother grew up, taking my cue from my parents’ negative



Photo of Mendel Brauer (front left) with sister Tsila on the right. Behind are his sisters Dora (right) and Sara. Courtesy Celia Brauer.

associations about their homelands. I heard from Rachel that there would be a World Reunion of Liepaja (Libau) Jewry in 2014. Maybe it was time for me to visit these distant places, which had always been a fantasy. I seized the moment and booked my ticket.

My father always spoke fondly of his city whose natural beauty was legendary. Libau was a resort town bordering a long snow-white sandy beach by the Baltic Sea. There was a forest created in the early 20th century to block the sand coming into town on windy days.

There were rose gardens, a famous trolley, a lake and beautiful seaside houses. Today, after many decades of Soviet occupation, the town was still beautiful but some of the houses stood empty and decaying since the town had shrunk to 70,000 citizens after the steel mill closed.

I made a point of finding the houses where my father lived. Their family home was now nonexistent but I did find the street and a home across the road that my father had mentioned. Then I found the small wooden apartment building in the old city where he lived as a young man. I went on to visit the original art deco building that still housed Libau’s market where my grandfather — who was a butcher — sold meat alongside my grandmother.

The reunion group took us to visit sites where great numbers of Jews had been killed during the Second World War. I learned that 7,000 people were murdered from Libau before May 9, 1945 and after the war 25 Jews remained. I also discovered that of the 135 Righteous

(continued on page 8)

THE ERA OF THE WITNESS

BY LISE KIRCHNER

As a Holocaust educator, I have found the most powerful pedagogical tools to be testimonies and first-hand accounts of our local Holocaust survivors. By weaving survivors' personal stories, family artefacts and video testimonies together with the carefully researched historical narratives in our exhibit texts, I am able to engage students emotionally and intellectually with the history of the Holocaust. And so it was with some trepidation that I approached Annette Wieviorka's *The Era of the Witness*, believing the book might pit the professional historian against the survivor testimonies which inspire our students so effectively.

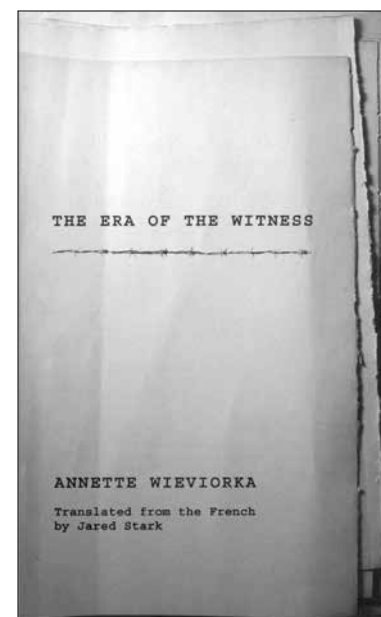
At the heart of Wieviorka's book is the conflict between scholarly histories (rigorously researched and objectively verifiable, but often sterile) and personal witness testimonies (intimate, emotionally evocative, but often factually inaccurate). It is the impact of individual memory, with its frailties and seductive emotional qualities, on the writing of history that most concerns Wieviorka. She fears that the proliferation of video testimony and its acceptance as the primary mode of discourse concerning the Holocaust will distort and ultimately supplant scholarly history. The emotional resonance of witness testimonies tends to paralyze historians so they abandon the critical stance necessary for the "obstinate quest for the truth" in favour of a sentimental, unreflective memorializing of the Holocaust.

Wieviorka traces the emergence of the witness through three historic periods during which the purpose, content and meaning of testimony has evolved in response to changing political contexts.

Victims spontaneously created the earliest testimonies during and immediately after the Holocaust as a form of resistance and remembrance. Preserved in ghetto archives and private collections, these diaries, letters, and collective chronicles, as well as postwar memorial books and writings, existed as a private memory of the genocide largely ignored by academics and the public.

In the second era, testimony entered the public realm when it was made the centrepiece of the evidence at the Eichmann trial (1961). Here survivor testimony was deliberately used to "touch the hearts of men," teach the world a history lesson and make vivid the Holocaust in a way the sterile documentary evidence in the Nuremberg trial had failed to do. With the power of the state underwriting the witnesses in this judicial setting, testimony acquired "extraordinary force" and survivors were legitimized as "truth tellers" and "bearers of history" in direct competition with "mere documents".

The third era, beginning in the late 1970s, treated testimony as *the* essential source of historical evidence. Thousands of video testimonies were recorded in response to a public demand for intimate, direct and "authentic" histories. Wieviorka considers two documentation projects, Yale University's Fortunoff Video Testimony Archive, which focuses on allowing the survivor to speak and to be heard, and Steven Spielberg's Shoah Visual History Foundation, which focuses on the transmission of history. Wieviorka is critical of the Shoah Foundation's industrialized and scripted approach to testimony collection which presents Holocaust history as a succession of



Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, translated from French by Jared Stark, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006 (originally *L'ère du témoin*, Paris: Plon, 1998). The volume is available for loan from the VHEC Library.

(continued on page 10)

(Memoir, Testimony, and Text, continued from page 5)

implications of the Holocaust in the classroom.

Revised learning outcomes and a heightened engagement with media are shaping the way students learn. Jody Spiegel, director of the Azrieli Foundation Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program, presents interactive approaches for engaging with survivor memoirs in "The Twitter Book Club." Jonathan Friedrichs, an award-winning film and theatre producer and classroom teacher, introduces strategies for critical engagement with the Holocaust in "Using the Internet and Social Media to Teach the Holocaust." Finally, in "Using Historical Thinking Concepts with Genocide Issues", Professor Peter Seixas applies a conceptual framework for grappling with primary sources that contribute to students' understanding of genocide.

Conference participants will receive teaching resources from the Historical Thinking Project and the International Tracing Service, as well as the latest series of Holocaust survivor memoirs and short films courtesy of the Azrieli Foundation.

To launch the conference, educators and members of the public are invited to attend the West Coast launch of *The Azrieli Series of Holocaust Survivor Memoirs* on Thursday, February 19th at 7PM. Featuring a reading by Jeanne Beker, Canadian television personality, fashion designer, author, and child of Holocaust survivors, the event will take place at the Museum of Vancouver's *From Rationing to Ravishing: The Transformation of Women's Clothing in the 1940's and 1950's*. Please see RSVP details in the Upcoming Events listings in this issue.

Conference registration closes January 30, 2015. For more information or to register, please visit www.vhec.org.

Sponsored by the David & Lil Shafran Endowment Fund of the VHEC.



Dr. Adara Goldberg is the Education Director at the VHEC. She has a background in Social Work and holds a PhD in Holocaust History.

(Revisiting Family Connections, continued from page 6)

Gentiles in Latvia, 26 came from Libau. One of these was the father of the organizer of this reunion.

This tour took us from one site of the killings — the lighthouse — to another — the fish packing plant. We stood and said prayers at the memorial signs.

Today the 95 Jews living in Libau are trying to rebuild the community. Amongst historical information available at the Liepaja Jewish Community Centre was a copy of the large memorial from the cemetery. All the members of my dad's family who had perished were listed there.

On the second to last day we went to the Skede Memorial. Skede was a particularly difficult place because of the number of people murdered, the manner in which this took place in this beautiful seaside setting and the documentary evidence. On this day, there was quite a crowd, which included dignitaries such as the Israeli ambassador to Latvia. They were dedicating the Righteous Gentiles Alley.

There were many days of speeches and stories, learning history, making new acquaintances, dining together and visiting the beautiful town. All the while I was trying to imagine my father, grandparents and aunts living here among a vibrant Jewish community that had vanished.

The countries of Latvia and Poland are once again falling under the shadow of the Russians and their expansionist drive. But hopefully the people of these lands — including the newly formed Jewish community in Libau — will be able to live in relative prosperity. And my ancestors can rest in peace in the lands where they once lived and worked, laughed and cried for many hundreds of years. And maybe I can return again to further understand and connect with my roots.



Celia Brauer is involved with the VHEC Second Generation Group. She is a freelance artist, writer and is a founder of a non-profit watershed group. She is currently attending the University of British Columbia.

REFLECTIONS FROM YAD VASHEM ALUMNI

BY ADARA GOLDBERG

Since 2006, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre has administered scholarships offered by the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem to send British Columbian educators to study at the International School for Holocaust Studies Summer Seminars at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel. During the intensive programs, teachers have gained knowledge and classroom strategies that have supported the work of the VHEC and fostered best practices in Holocaust education across the province.

In advance of the 2015 seminars, alumni offer reflections on how the seminar has impacted their teaching of the Holocaust.

ILANA FINKLEMAN

Judaic Studies & French teacher, Richmond Jewish Day School

"The Jewish Educators Seminar helped me to develop my teaching of the Holocaust by deepening my knowledge of the history, while connecting to the personal stories of those who endured the Shoah. I felt the impact of learning through testimonial and personal narrative. Bringing these voices into my classroom is the most powerful way to have students connect and develop empathy for those who lived through the Holocaust. The introduction to a large range of curriculum and resources has given me the tools to implement age-appropriate learning in the classroom. The seminar has equipped me with the know-how to feel confident in my teaching of the Holocaust."

SARAH FRUEAN

Social Studies teacher, Pitt Meadows Secondary School

"The seminar provided the opportunity to connect with other educators, to hear about what is happening in curriculum around the world and to share teaching and lesson ideas with one another. The passion and commitment of the other participants was contagious and I feel that it will fuel my teaching for years to come. In addition, the wealth of information and knowledge provided by the seminar has given me a much better understanding of the Holocaust

and its long-term impacts. As a result of my participation in the seminar, I feel much more confident and competent in approaching the topic with my students."

CATHY GUTKOWSKI

English teacher, Clayton Heights Secondary School

"The seminar has significantly impacted my teaching of the Holocaust. In the past, I jarred my students to attention with graphic images as we began our unit. Now, I ask my students to share their hobbies, the ways they celebrate holidays, and daily activities. I then show online videos and testimonies to highlight prewar Jewish life and ask students to draw comparisons. Clearly, there are many. It is important to represent Jewish people not as six million dead, but as individuals with lives similar to my students. Thanks to Yad Vashem educator Shulamit Imber, I now understand my responsibility to bring students safely in and safely out of the Holocaust."

ARON ROSENBERG

English & Drama teacher, King David High School

"The seminar allowed me to connect and interact with educators from around the world. Together, we explored the events, themes, repercussions, and issues surrounding the dramatic changes that faced Jewish communities in Europe before, during, and after the Second World War. Becoming part of a community of educators interested in incorporating Shoah studies into their teaching helped me get excited about and contextualize the importance of genocide studies and Judaic studies, as well as the cultural, religious, and political implications. I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to explore these concepts within a supportive and engaged group of critical thinkers."

For more information or to apply for a scholarship, contact Adara Goldberg at 604.264.0499 or education@vhec.org.

Supported by Anita Shafran, Elaine and Zev Shafran, Yosef Wosk, and the Diamond Foundation.

(The Era of Witness, continued from page 7)

thousands of individual experiences designed to elicit an emotional response rather than incite critical analysis. This “Americanization of the Holocaust” decontextualizes Holocaust testimony and places it in service of such traditional American ideals such as innocence, optimism and equality, thereby distorting and usurping the historical record.

The VHEC collection contains a number of audio and video testimony projects, beginning with Dr. Robert Krell’s project at the University of British Columbia in 1979 and continuing to the present day, using a community-based model akin to the Fortunoff Archive approach. With this invaluable archival resource at its disposal, the VHEC professional staff use witness testimony to animate themes in our exhibits, bringing the human dimension of Holocaust history home to students in a way that textbooks cannot.

Contrary to my initial fears, *The Era of the Witness* is not an admonition against the pedagogical use of testimony in this way. Indeed, Wieviorka concludes that historians should not “wage war against memory and against the witness”. She urges that teachers must present testimonies alongside (not in place of) the “dry” academic histories of the Holocaust. This approach enables us to appreciate the “extraordinary riches” offered by testimony without letting emotions displace critical reflection.

Alternatively, historians can read, listen to, and watch testimonies without looking for what they know is not to

be found — clarification of precise events, places, dates, and numbers, which are wrong with the regularity of a metronome — but knowing also that testimony contains extraordinary riches: an encounter with the voice of someone who has lived through a piece of history; and, in oblique fashion, not factual truth, but the more subtle and just as indispensable truth of an epoch and of an experience.

Witness testimonies offer Holocaust educators’ unique opportunities to develop critical historical thinking skills in students. Affective engagement with witness testimony can enhance these skills if testimony is understood and analysed as *one* of many sources of history, each with its own limitation and advantages. Wieviorka’s book poses numerous questions that could be used to encourage critical inquiry by students, such as:

- How does testimony change as it is distanced from the historical event?
- How does the purpose or goal of the testimony affect its content and meaning?
- How is a testimony shaped by the sensibilities and expectations of the society in which it is produced?

With this reflective approach, testimony is no longer in danger of distorting and corrupting the historical record, but instead contributes to the construction of a richer historic narrative and collective memory of the Holocaust.



Lise Kirchner is a lawyer and volunteer docent at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

The VHEC’s project, *Survivor Testimony: Preservation, Access and Pedagogical Use*, is supported by Inter-Action, Canada’s Multiculturalism Grants and Contribution Program, administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Currently underway and ongoing through 2015, the initiative will ensure the ongoing preservation and improved access of the Centre’s testimony collection, as well as its integration into future exhibits and educational programs.

The Centre continues to document local survivor testimonies thanks to generous support from Anita Shafran, Elaine and Zev Shafran and Yosef Wosk. For more information please contact info@vhed.org or 604.264.0499.

BUILDING A NEW NATIONAL TREASURE FOR ALL CANADIANS

BY MARGI OKSNER

Washington has one. Paris has one. London has one. Even Sydney has one. The capital city of practically every major democracy has one.

It's time Ottawa had one, too.

Canada is the only World War II Allied country that does not have a National Holocaust Monument in its capital. Thankfully, this is a fact that is about to change.

At the 2013 National Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony held on April 23rd in Ottawa, Minister Tim Uppal, MP for Sherwood Park, Alberta (part of the Edmonton Capital Region) who originally presented the private member's bill to build a Holocaust Monument in Ottawa, made the official announcement that Canada's National Holocaust Monument will be breaking ground in the spring of 2015 on a prominent site on the Lebreton Flats, in clear view of the Peace Tower.

The National Holocaust Monument Development Council (NHMDC) made up of Chair, Rabbi Dan Friedman of Edmonton, Fran Sonshine and Ralph Lean from Toronto, and Alvin Segal and Elliot Lifson from Montreal, is charged with raising \$4.5 million from across Canada. Our partners from the Government of Canada will match these funds to a maximum of another \$4 million and have already donated the land for this new national treasure.

The NHMDC began their journey towards this national monument by assembling a panel of experts and stakeholders from across Canada. The consensus was that the monument must achieve three aims: serve as a memorial for the victims of the Nazis, acknowledge the important contribution of the survivors to the Canadian nation, and stand as an eternal symbol and reminder to future



TOP: Artist's rendering of an aerial view of the National Holocaust Monument. BOTTOM LEFT: Artist's rendering of the Stairway of Hope. BOTTOM RIGHT: Artist's rendering of the Journey Through the Star, design by architect Daniel Libeskind. Courtesy Lord Cultural Resources.

generations of Canada's commitment to combat all manners of intolerance and prejudice around the world.

Once the vision was determined, the design competition was initiated. Submissions came from around the world from seventy-three architectural teams, of which six finalists were chosen. A jury of experts consisting of architects, artists, historians and survivors was assembled and the finalists were asked to present their designs and concepts. While all of the entries were outstanding, the jury and the ministers chose *Landscape of Loss, Memory and Survival* as the concept that best embodied the vision. Gail Dexter-Lord, the co-president of Lord Cultural Resources, led the team composed of architect Daniel Libeskind, artist-photographer Edward Burtynsky, landscape architect Claude Cormier and subject matter advisor Doris Bergen presented this design.

As part of a group of proud Canadians the Council is so pleased to report that of the \$4.5 million of private funding required, more than \$4 million has been secured from donors across Canada.

"Our Monument is poised to become a new and iconic destination for residents and visitors to Ottawa," said Chair Rabbi Daniel Friedman. "When Minister Baird first discussed this amazing project, he talked about the impact this monument would have on all Canadians and that it was his wish that our monument would contribute to making Ottawa a world-class capital city. We know that this design will definitely meet that criterion."

This Monument will be a lasting tribute to the victims of the Holocaust and will serve as a symbol of Canada's diversity, its leadership in promoting values of pluralism and tolerance and its tradition of defending human rights, including the freedom of religion.

For more information about the project, the Council members and the design team, visit the National Holocaust Monument website at www.holocaustmonument.ca.



Margi Oksner is Executive Director of the National Holocaust Monument Development Council.

METRO VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

On April 26, 1987, a dedicated group of Metro Vancouver Holocaust survivors, their families and supporters unveiled a memorial monument to remember the Holocaust as well as those members of their families who had perished.

The memorial monument was unveiled at Schara Tzedek Cemetery in New Westminster in the presence of 1,300 members of the community. The survivors finally had a "metzeivah", a burial site, albeit symbolic, to visit and at which to grieve.

The memorial monument gives the community a physical place to mourn, and remember. It was built for — and by — our community's Holocaust survivors and also for future generations, in the effort to ensure the Holocaust is not forgotten.

Names of Jewish family members who perished during the Holocaust can still be added to the monument. For more information please call the VHEC at 604.264.0499.



MY QUEST FOR TIKKUN OLAM

BY LILLIAN BORAKS NEMETZ & ROBBIE WAISMAN

After many years of silence about his traumatic childhood during the Holocaust, Robbie Waisman started to speak out about his experiences. Since then, he has been an unstoppable force in promoting human rights throughout North America.

Robbie Waisman was born in Skarzysko, Poland, in 1931, the youngest of six children. At the age of ten, Robbie became a slave labourer in a German munitions factory. Later, Waisman was deported to Buchenwald concentration camp, where the American army eventually liberated him on April 11, 1945. His only surviving family was his sister, Leah.

Today, Waisman is recognized not only as a community leader and philanthropist but also as an educator. Past president of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, he lectures in schools, communities and prisons about his personal experience during the Holocaust. In recent years, Waisman has addressed the legacy of residential schools, speaking with students about the tragic consequences of institutionalized racism.

Robbie Waisman has found a secret to healing his wounds by pursuing what one might refer to as a “magnificent obsession” in helping others overcome their own suffering. He writes about this quest in his own words:

On September 8th 2008, I was invited to speak to the Dene Nation, in Fort Providence, 300 km north of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. My visit was intended to help with the healing process for many hundreds of First Nations members who went through the agony of residential schools.

The treatment of residential schools is a sad and shameful chapter in Canadian history. For more than a century,



“Where are our parents?” Jewish youth liberated from Buchenwald en route to France, June 1945. Courtesy Robbie Waisman.

residential schools, under the auspices of the federal government, separated more than 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities for the purposes of assimilation into the dominant Christian society. This action resulted in the destruction of traditional family and community life, and several generations’ lost connections to Native cultural identities and languages.

How did I happen to go there in the first place?

When retired Chief David Ahenakew was first convicted for wilfully promoting hatred against Jews in 2005, the entire nation was in shock. Many outraged First Nations leaders expressed shame to the Canadian Jewish Congress that one of their own could say such horrible things.

As a gesture of goodwill and rapprochement, the Canadian Jewish Congress invited several Chiefs on a trip to Israel. The trip was extremely successful and an eye-opener for the entire group.

One participant, Terri Brown, was so moved by everything she saw that she wanted to do something for her people towards the healing process. Wendy Lumbart of the Toronto branch of the Canadian Jewish Congress suggested that perhaps hearing from a Holocaust survivor speaker might be helpful. Indeed, she was right.

When I ultimately shared my experiences as a Holocaust survivor with First Nations communities, first in Yellowknife and later elsewhere in Canada, I was totally astonished and rewarded by the fact that some who had never spoken about their horrible experiences were encouraged to do so.

(continued on page 14)

(My Quest for Tikkun Olam, continued from page 13)

In 2009, I was inducted in Inuvik by Truth and Reconciliation Canada as an Honorary Witness. ‘Witnesses’ are called to be the keepers of history when an event of historic significance occurs.

Having gone through the Holocaust gave me an opportunity to connect with this group, and to help them realize what they can do with their lives after their traumatic past.

In January 2014, Waisman was honoured with the Canadian Governor General’s “Caring Canadian Award,” which recognizes individuals who volunteer their time to help others and to build a better informed and more caring nation. He continues to speak across the country and beyond.

Waisman continues:

It is impossible to compare the Holocaust to any tragedy in recent history.

For more than 30 years I remained silent. I came to realize that those of us who have survived have a sacred duty and obligation to remember and teach the world compassion and understanding.

I have done this with First Nations, Rwandans, as well as survivors of Darfur, and others. I always use the example of my friends – the 426 Boys of Buchenwald – to show that despite all that happened to us, we managed to overcome huge losses and resume our lives. When we share our history it sets an example and helps to bring healing to others that have endured all sorts of suffering and are unable to continue to have a life.

And so Robbie Waisman’s “magnificent obsession” continues to thrive and set an example for a troubled world. His faith in humanity and his resilience of the spirit symbolize one man’s heroic quest for Tikkun Olam and hope for “Never Again.”

Robbie Waisman is a VHEC Outreach Speaker and a member of the Centre’s board of directors. Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, also a VHEC Outreach Speaker, is an award-winning author, an instructor at UBC’s Writing Centre and the editor of the “No Longer Alone” page of Zachor.

VHEC COLLECTION

Over the past few months, the VHEC has been the recipient of several generous archival donations. Among items received is a remarkable donation made by VHEC Outreach Speaker Louise Sorensen of a first edition, second printing, copy of Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl*. This copy is in Dutch and was purchased by Sorensen’s mother shortly after the war. This donation coincided with the end of the *Anne Frank: A History for Today* exhibit, which included other artefacts previously donated by Ms. Sorensen, including forged and authentic identity cards and Dutch ration cards.



HONOURING A CARING CANADIAN

BY DEREK GLAZER



Governor General of Canada, his Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, presented the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award to Mr. Robert Waisman, on Monday, April 7, 2014, during a ceremony at Rideau Hall, in Ottawa. Created in 1995, the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award recognizes living Canadians and permanent residents who have made a significant, sustained, unpaid contribution to their community, in Canada or abroad. Courtesy MCpl Vincent Carboneau, Rideau Hall, © OSGG, 2014.

It was in the mid-fifties — I was a travelling salesman. On a trip to Calgary, I met Robbie Waisman for the first time. We instantly became good friends and still are to this day. I learned that Robbie was a child survivor of the Holocaust, who, in 1945, was liberated from Buchenwald — and for three years, was housed at a French orphanage before emigrating to Canada. Except for his sister, he had lost all his family.

He never spoke of his ordeal to me and it was not until the “Keegstra affair” became public, that he began to open up. From that point, and continuing to this day, Robbie has felt compelled to share his story with other Canadians, especially the younger generation.

Over the years, I have attended the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre's Symposia on the Holocaust as a facilitator and have witnessed the effect of Robbie's

honesty and sincerity in explaining what happens when hate begins to rule a society.

Robbie has travelled coast to coast in both Canada and the United States. The hundreds of letters he has received from his student audiences, tell of the deep emotional impact his story evokes.

This is when, I believe, I decided that Robbie should be recognized for the incredible teaching he has imparted to our future leaders, about democracy, tolerance and acceptance.

So I began writing to government officials, securing information as to how to go about nominating Robbie for national recognition. After nearly two years, it was suggested, by the Chancellery of Honours, that they would be happy to have his nomination go towards the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award.

December 16, 2013, Robbie was informed that, “On behalf of His Excellency, the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, you have been awarded the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award, in recognition of your contribution to your community.”

Robbie, his wife Gloria, and family attended the award ceremony, in Ottawa on April 7, 2014.



Derek Glazer with Robbie Waisman

Derek Glazer, a native of London, England, lived through the bombings during the war, served in the Royal Air Force, from 1945-48 as a photographer. He immigrated to Canada in 1952. Derek is active in the Canadian Legion 178, Van Dusen Gardens, the YVR Greencoat Program, and is an avid photographer.

SEPTEMBER 18 – DECEMBER 22, 2014

GET WELL

David Feldman, Get well.
Szajman Family

Norman Gladstone, Speedy
recovery. Joyce Resin & Peter
Reese, Anonymous

Elizabeth Wolak, Speedy
recovery, Debby & Mark Choit

MAZEL TOV

Betty Brauer Ashkenazy, On
your special birthday. Celia
Brauer

Bev Spring & Alan Morinis, On
the birth of your granddaughter.
Hymie & Rome Fox

Michael Dymant, Happy
Birthday Uncle. Lenny & Keri,
Edward & Jessica & Kids

Nadine Lipetz, On your 70th
Birthday. Esther Brandt

Ilana Strummer, In honour
of your birthday. Shoshana &
Moshe Fidelman

Aylee Fox & Sol Azouz, On
your engagement. Maria
Rozenberg & Aaron Landa

Naomi & Alf Price, On your
Golden Wedding Anniversary.
Merle & Ivan Linde

Lisa & Gabe Milton, Happy
Birthdays. Mom & Dad

Michael Millman, Happy 60th
Birthday. Les, Karen & Babs
Cohen & Family

George Melville, On becoming
Chancellor of Kwantlen
Polytechnic University. Jocy
Lowy & Richard Lowy

Gerri London, Two books
donated to the Vancouver
Holocaust Education Centre
Library for your Birthday.
Sylvia Cristall

Gerri London, Happy Birthday.
Anonymous

Cathy Golden, Happy
Birthday. Esther Brandt, Lynne
Fader, Andi Babins & Family

Murray Isman, On your
almost retirement. Les &
Karen Cohen & Family

Birgit Westergaard & Norman
Gladstone, On your 40th
Wedding Anniversary. Eve & Ian

SYMPATHY

Ralph Zbarsky, In memory of
your Mother & Grandmother.
Birgit Westergaard & Yosef &
Norman Gladstone

Paul Wittenberg, On your loss.
Al Szajman

Brenda Wall & Family, On the
loss of your brother & uncle,
Sid. Peter & Marla Gropper,
Ethel Kofsky

Serge & Brenda Vanry, On
the loss of your son, Michael.
Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Alex &
Colette Buckman, David & Sidi
Schaffer

Claire Swartz, On the passing
of your uncle, Josef Brandt.
Esther, Jacob & Jedidiah
Blumes

Diana & Elliott Steinberg &
Family, On the passing of your
Mom. Lana & Mendy Landa

In memory of Ruth Sigal.
Susan Curtis, Marilee Sigal

Stephen Rom & Family, On
the passing of your mother &
grandmother, Gertrude. Mark,
Jacob, Talya & Nirit Rozenberg

Randa Bloom, On the passing
of your mother, Sylvia. Ethel
Kofsky

Birgit Westergaard, In
memory of your Mother. Bill
& Pamela Lachman & Family,
Robbie & Gloria Waisman

Erite Himelfarb, In memory
of your Mother. Bill & Pamela
Lachman & Family

Mr. & Mrs. Jack Bogdonov, On
the loss of your Sister. Robbie
& Gloria Waisman

Barbara James, In memory of
Ralph James. Arlene James

Marcus Brandt, On your loss.
Al Szajman, Robert & Marilyn
Krell & Family

Nancy Benyaer, In memory of
Maurice. Ronald & Estaris
Laye, Rosa Ferera

Mariette Doduck, In memory
of your sister, Sara Hauptman.
Barrie & Ellen Yackness &
Family, Gerri & Mark London
& Dana, Dan, & Rachel, David,
Gabriel, & Noah, Sandra &
Norman Miller, Lillian Boraks
Nemetz, Barrie & Ellen
Yackness & Family, Szajman
Family, Harvey & Jody Dales,
Robert & Marilyn Krell

Cathy Golden, In memory of
your aunt, Sara Hauptman.
Hymie & Rome Fox

Esther Brandt, In memory of
your sister, Sara Hauptman.
Szajman Family, Harvey &
Jody Dales, Robert & Marilyn
Krell

Linda Robertson, In memory
of your sister, Lorene. Judy &
Neil Kornfeld

Jeff & Robin Gelfer & Family,
On the passing of your
mother, Diane. Odie Kaplan

Tessie Finkelstein, On your
loss. Lillian Boraks Nemetz

Tobin Robbins, In memory of
your aunt, Anna Leith. Rita &
Marvin Weintraub

In Honor of Ruth Mehler.
Audrey Mehler

Chris Friedrichs, In memory of
Rhoda Friedrichs. Kit & Helena
Krieger, Birgit Westergaard &
Norman Gladstone

Sylvia Langmann, In memory
of Ruth Sturdy. Claralana
Langmann

Shirley Kushner & Family,
On the loss of your husband
& father, Jerry Kushner. Ida
Kaplan & Odie Kaplan, Rome
& Hymie Fox

Gord Kushner, Our
condolences. Michaela, Matt,
Shael, & Bo Singerman

Yoel & Gaby Farzan, On your
loss. Shoshana & Shawn
Lewis

Alexander Hart, In memory
of your Mother. Robert &
Marilyn Krell

Nicholls Family, On the
passing of Bill Nicholls. Kari
Golden, Robert & Marilyn
Krell, Dan Sonnenschein

Abbe & Simon Chivers, On the
passing of your Mom. Lana &
Mendy Landa

Sandra Broudy, On the loss
of your brother Harry. Birgit
Westergaard & Norman
Gladstone

Joe Barak & Family, On the
passing of your Mom. Lana &
Mendy Landa

THANK YOU

Robbie Waisman, In
appreciation. Richard Menkis
& UBC History 441

Oleg Vertlib, For all your help.
Karina Vertlib

Stan Taviss, For your kind
assistance throughout the
years. Julie Gutovich

Danny Berish & Kathy Hurley,
For supporting the VHECs
educational mandate. Adara
Goldberg

Ilana Ivanova, For your work
on the World Reunion of
Liepaja Jewry. Celia Brauer

Magda Dziaczkowska, For
your help guiding me to
Lublin, Poland. Celia Brauer

Adara Goldberg, In your
honour. Shayna Goldberg

Serge Haber, In your honour.
Frances Grunberg

THANK YOU TO OUR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

OUTREACH SPEAKERS

Janos Benisz, Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Alex Buckman, Mariette Doduck, David Ehrlich, Bill Gluck, Serge Haber, Jannushka Jakoubovitch, Chaim Kornfeld, Robert Krell, Inge Manes, Bente Nathan Thomsen, Peter Parker, Claude Romney, Martha Salcudean, Louise Sorensen, Peter Suedfeld, Tom Szekely, Robbie Waisman; Coordinator: Rita Akselrod

DOCENTS

Rajiv Cowasjee, Jodi Cristall, Reva Dexter, Myriam Dinim, Sylvie Epstein, Myriam Gerber, Frances Grunberg, Helen Heacock Rivers, James Highet, Dodie Katzenstein, Dina Kaufman, Sarah Kharikian, Lise Kirchner, Uma Kumar, Lucien Lieberman, Ivan Linde, Ellen Millman, Herb Mills, Cathy Paperny, Evelyn Ray, Meredith Shaw, Shana Saper, Talya Shirley, Gita Silver, Rina Vizer, Anita Willson, Emily Winckler

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Richie Elias, Sylvie Epstein, Amalia Boe-Fishman, Debby Freiman, Shayna Goldberg, Hodie Kahn, Max Kelly, Lise Kirchner, Kit Krieger, Ella Levitt, Lucien Lieberman, Ivan Linde, Gerri London, Janos Mate, Ellen Millman, Anita Shafran, Al Szajman, Stan Taviss, Kevin Veltheer, Gloria Waisman
Teacher Advisory: Jonathan Friedrichs, Kit Krieger, Tom Morton, Peter Seixas, Jinny St. Hilaire, Andrea Webb, Anna-Mae Wiesenthal

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Our apologies for any errors or omissions



UPCOMING EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

*Commemorating the 70th Anniversary
of the Liberation of Auschwitz*

Reflections on Liberation
Robbie Waisman

NUMBERED

A Documentary Film Screening

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2015 • 7 PM

NORMAN & ANNETTE ROTHSTEIN THEATRE
950 WEST 41ST AVENUE, VANCOUVER

EVERYONE WELCOME, ADMISSION BY DONATION

**Candle lighting in memory of those who perished.
Holocaust survivors invited to participate in candle
lighting procession. Please call the VHEC at
604.264.0499 for more information.**

*Presented by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre in
partnership with the Norman & Annette Rothstein Theatre
and the Vancouver Jewish Film Centre.
Funded by our community's generous contributions to
Federation Annual Campaign and by Rita Akselrod & family, in
loving memory of Ben Akselrod z"l.
Audience members will receive Holocaust Survivor Memoirs
generously donated by the Azrieli Foundation.*

THE AZRIELI SERIES OF HOLOCAUST MEMOIRS

West Coast Launch

JOY RUNS DEEPER

By Bronia & Joseph Beker

*Featuring Jeanne Beker
Television Personality, Fashion Designer,
Daughter of Holocaust Survivors*

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2015 • 7 PM

MUSEUM OF VANCOUVER
1100 CHESTNUT STREET, VANCOUVER

**RECEPTION TO FOLLOW. ADMISSION IS FREE
BUT SPACE IS LIMITED.**

PLEASE RSVP: 604.264.0499 • INFO@VHEC.ORG

*Presented by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre in
partnership with the Azrieli Foundation.*

YOM HASHOAH

*Community-wide Holocaust
Remembrance Day*

Wednesday, April 15, 2015 • 7 PM
SAVE THE DATE

WOSK AUDITORIUM, JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE
950 WEST 41ST AVENUE, VANCOUVER

EVERYONE WELCOME

**Holocaust survivors invited to participate in candle
lighting procession.**

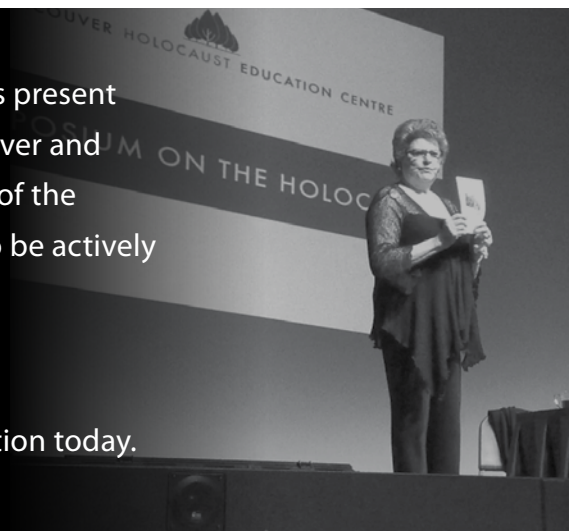
*Presented by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.
Supported by The Gail Feldman Heller Endowment
and the Sarah Rozenberg-Warm Memorial Endowment Funds
of the VHEC and by the Jewish Community Centre of Greater
Vancouver. Funded by our community's generous contributions
to Federation Annual Campaign, and by the Province of British
Columbia.*

*Please remember to renew your existing VHEC membership
or activate a new membership TODAY.*

Your SUPPORT by purchasing a VHEC membership helps us present innovative Holocaust education throughout Metro Vancouver and beyond. It helps us motivate teachers to share the lessons of the Holocaust with students and, in turn, stimulate students to be actively engaged young citizens.

We need your support NOW.

Please make your donation in support of Holocaust education today.



CALL THE VHEC AT 604.264.0499 OR DONATE SAFELY ON LINE: WWW.VHEC.ORG
For those of you who have already contributed, we thank you for your participation and generosity.



50 – 950 WEST 41ST AVENUE, VANCOUVER, BC V5Z 2N7

