



# Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Canada

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SEPTMBER 2011  
שנה טובה ומתוקה תשע"ב



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## Best wishes to you and your family for a Healthy, Sweet and Happy New Year 5772

On behalf of the Board and Staff of JIAS Canada, we would like to wish everyone Shanah Tova and Chag Sameach.

As we celebrate the year 5772 with our loved ones, I encourage you all to take a moment of your time to reflect upon our global Jewish community, with an emphasis on those individuals who need our support and commitment.

Next year JIAS Canada will celebrate its 90th anniversary. Over the course of our long history, many newcomers have walked through our doors with stories of pain, hardship and heartbreak, but have left with new strength and hope. We are proud to see them triumph over adversity and become contributing members of Canadian society.

Our board, staff and Service Providers continue to work together on innovative projects, which JIAS Canada is proud to highlight in this newsletter. These projects would not be possible without your generous contributions. We need your continued support in order to strengthen our Jewish community and realize the dream of every newcomer to this country – to make Canada their true home.

L'Shanah tovah u'metukah

May you and your families have a good and sweet year!

Victor Linetsky  
President



### 2011 Scholarship Winners

Einat Menashe and Yosef Lazarev

Say thank-you!



See their letters on page 6

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## “Bridges” – Leadership Development Program of Jews from Russian-speaking background at UJA Federation of Greater Toronto



Ted Sokolsky, President and CEO of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and Liz Wolfe, Chair, Board of Directors, UJA Federation speak on the first opening session of ‘Bridges’

In response to community needs, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto in collaboration with JIAS Canada and Stephen & Sophie Lewar JIAS Canada Fund initiated a leadership development program called ‘Bridges’. It is based on the JOLT program (JIAS Canada Opportunity for Jewish Leadership Training: Leadership Bridging Cultures). It aims to train leaders and concurrently create a more welcoming and inclusive Jewish community. Unlike many other

‘Bridges’ aims to build a cohort of RSJ leaders in Toronto; connect RSJs with the Toronto Jewish community; educate Toronto Jewish community about the RSJs and their experience; sensitize community-based organizations to issues of diversity and help eliminate systemic barriers that are in the way of bridging the two communities.

I have in the past been involved in student type activities geared towards bridging the gap between RSJ university students and their Canadian counterparts. And now 25 years later I am looking forward to contributing to bridging the gap and building a real connection between the RSJ community and its Canadian Jewish counterpart. I believe that the timing is ripe with opportunities on both sides. The core of the Russian-speaking Jewish community is now established & well beyond the initial ‘settling-in’ stage. Many, like myself, would like to see & contribute towards a greater integration with the Canadian Jewish community. We have also reached, I believe, a certain level of

maturity - as a community - to appreciate many features & benefits that would come to us from building bridges & connections to the greater Jewish community.

**Galina Sandler, participant**

Bar-mitzvah for my older son I made with JRCC as the only option available. I wish I could provide my younger (11) son with more ‘Canadian’ way to do it. Also through my kids I felt unhappy and unsatisfied with existing ways to preserve Hebrew and celebrate holidays with kids inside or outside the community. I am interested in developing the opportunities to keep the new generation Jewish in a secular way but with strong ties to the Jewish community and Jewish People.

**Dan Ussyshkin, participant**



Program participants: left to right – Galina Sandler, Katy Zaidman, Vadim Sloutsky

Program participants on the tour of historic Jewish Toronto led by Susan Jackson



leadership development programs it works with RSJs (Russian Speaking Jews) on leadership development and educates the host community about RSJs, their talents and contributions, Russian Jewish culture etc. The JOLT program has proved successful in other Jewish communities, such as Calgary, Ottawa and Vancouver. ‘Bridges’ utilizes the JOLT’s philosophy and mission with necessary adjustments for Toronto as a bigger community.

The program is planned for the duration of 18 months. It consists of three components: training, mentorship and observership. Training sessions are a combination of guest lectures and group discussions. Russian Jewish identity and its historical evolution, Toronto Jewish community history, Jewish organizations and leadership skills are among many topics discussed. During the mentorship stage the emerging RSJ leaders are matched with leaders who have made a significant volunteer contribution to the UJA Federation and the Jewish community of Toronto, such as Warren Kimel, David Engel, Leo Goldhar, Lorne Goldstein,

Bruce Leboff, Julia Koschitzky, Jeffrey Rosenthal, Honey Sherman, Shoel Silver, and Brian Shachter. These leaders are in a unique position to share their leadership experiences with the mentees, as well as to network and advocate



Dan Ussyshkin, Gloria Saprikin, Michael Leyderman, Marina Morgenshtern



Tour of Toronto

in bridging the Canadian Jewish and Russian Jewish communities through social and communal engagements. The first meeting between program mentors and participants is hosted by Warren and Debbie Kimel. Prof. David Shneer, Director of Program in Jewish Studies and Associate Professor of History at the University of Colorado and an advisor to JOLT, will provide a guest lecture. After the completion of training, participants will do observership. This component will introduce and orient them to committee/board work where they will be subsequently placed. It is anticipated that after the completion of the program participants will be actively involved in the Jewish communal life and motivate others in the RSJ community to be involved as well.

## Can't put a damper on Newcomer Maritime Shabbaton

By Joel Jacobson

Irene wasn't invited but nevertheless had a slight effect on the first Shabbaton for newcomer Jewish Canadians in the Atlantic region.

Twenty-six families, totalling 103 people including infants, assembled at Camp Kadimah Friday afternoon (August 26) for the weekend festivities of Shabbat celebration, religious services, discussion groups and good eats. By Sunday morning, a mere handful enjoyed breakfast, the remainder taking a quick exodus Saturday after Havdalah because of the threat of a hurricane that ravaged the Eastern United States and was rumoured to be on its way to Lake William.

Irene basically stayed away but for a few showers and higher-than-normal winds.

What did arrive at Camp Kadimah that weekend, though, was a genuine feeling of warmth, camaraderie, sincerity, a strong sense of Judaism and a desire to return for another, numerically-expanded Shabbaton next year.

"It was a unique opportunity to socialize with other newcomer families," said Ella Itzhakov of Halifax, who arrived in Halifax two years ago with her family. "There were many families we hadn't met before and we were happy to see new faces."

She said it was gratifying the newcomers could feel part of a community, that they could be together and not alone.

Nana Shteinberg of Dartmouth, almost three years in the Halifax area, was

thrilled to have Beth Israel Synagogue Rabbi Ari Sherbill attending. "He made the Shabbat spirit. You could feel the atmosphere of Shabbat when he played his guitar and sang (during pre-Shabbat service) and then he stayed and participated



Saturday night Bonfire

in the Saturday events, too."

The rabbi smiled. "I wanted to be part of this endeavour, to invigorate them to be part of the community. I already knew most of the people. In fact, they are good friends."

One discussion session investigated the question, "What it means to be Jewish in the Diaspora?" Rabbi Sherbill told those attending that it is not black and white. There are many ways of being Jewish, probably more than the 613 mitzvot. While he didn't expect large numbers at service because "it is not part of their culture (as Russian emigrants to Israel and now Israelis coming to Halifax), Friday night's service was full and Saturday night for Havdalah, it was full."

He stressed he saw lots of "positive energy. People were just happy to be part of a community and acknowledged the power of togetherness rather than individuals trying to make it on their own." Ella added, "This event reminded us we're Jewish. When we talked about what it meant to be a Jewish person, we discussed how we all have values, that Jews help each other around the world."

She continued, "When I first came to Halifax, I went to Friday night services quite often. Then I got a job and couldn't keep going. Now that I've seen the Rabbi play the guitar and sing, I truly want to go back. I could certainly see

my children were interested and wanted to hear him sing and tell stories."

Nana, who was on the organizing committee, said the weekend went as she had hoped. "It was a good learning experience for everyone."



## Trip to Saint John, NB

By Mila Voihanski

My acquaintance with Atlantic Canada started a few years ago when I first travelled to meet with the members of the Atlantic Jewish Council in Halifax. I was very impressed with the people and the city itself. Since then I was able to visit Fredericton and Moncton in addition to visiting Halifax every few months.

At the end of July I was fortunate to have an opportunity to visit Saint John together with Edna LeVine from AJC. I feel fortunate not because it is a beautiful city but because of how special the Jewish community is there and how inspired I felt after spending two days with them.

Like Halifax and Fredericton, Saint John decided to grow their community by bringing in new immigrants through the New Brunswick Provincial Nominee Program. To date this amazing group of people nominated 17 families due to arrive in 2011 – 2012.

Although small in numbers, there are now fewer than thirty Jewish families left in the city, they've organized various committees such as welcoming, housing, employment and others. Everyone takes his/hers respon-

sibility seriously which was clearly demonstrated at the community meeting held at the synagogue. Almost the entire community showed up and we had an amazing Power Point presentation describing the project prepared by Dan Elman.

At the end of the meeting Edna and I were given a private tour of the Saint John Jewish Historical Museum, also the home of the Congregation Shaarei Zedek. The museum was created in 1986 and features documents, artifacts and several exhibits. It is located in a magnificent old building with amazing craftsmanship, which was built by a wealthy merchant for his beloved bride many years ago. Each room seems to be more beautiful than the next.....

One could feel the enormous pride our tour guides had in their community and the museum. I was extremely touched when one of them said looking around: 'This is all going to be theirs (new immigrants)'.

The next day three members of the local Jewish community, Edna and I met with the staff of The Saint John Multicultural and Newcomers Resource Centre, Settle-



Saint John Immigration Steering Committee and Mila Voihanski (JIAS Canada)

ment Services of the Saint John YMCA and PRUDE INC (Pride Race Unity Dignity Education). It was a very productive meeting where we received a lot of information and developed very important networking opportunities.

## Yachad Mentorship Program: a New Winnipeg JCFS Initiative

By Merrill Shwaid

Yachad, the Hebrew word for together is a suitable name for a new JCFS initiative in Winnipeg.



Mentee Fernando Kapelusznik from Argentina on left with Leonard Ganetsky his mentor on the right

The Yachad Mentorship Program is aimed at maximizing opportunities for employment and community integration of Jewish immigrants to Winnipeg. It brings together Jewish immigrants with established Jewish community members currently working in similar/related occupational fields.

These short term mentorship relationships help build professional contacts for newcomers, supportive relationships and a sense of community caring togetherness. On June 20th twelve newcomers to Winnipeg's



Sherry Lercher Davis on the left With Mentee Meytal Lavy on the right

Jewish community attended a reception concluding the completion of their involvement in the inaugural Yachad Mentorship Program. All participating mentees had been matched with people in the community who could support their ability to find meaningful employment in Winnipeg. Carina Blumgrund, JCFS Coordinator for this new initiative commented that she was very pleased with the positive response she received from the community. The program consisted of a series of introductory workshops followed by three formal one hour sessions where mentors and mentees discussed the labour market and the community, and provided feedback on how the program was working out. Mentors generously devoted a great deal of time in their supportive role in the program.

Based on the success of the first program JCFS is planning on continuing the program again in the future. Emily Shane, JCFS Executive Director would like to see the graduate mentees eventually becoming mentors. In the spirit of community togetherness that would illustrate the concept of Yachad at its finest!

## David Bezmozgis writes the Soviet Jewry movement into literary history

Reviewed by Irena Karshenbaum

In the 1970s, an exodus of Soviet Jews, their suitcases stuffed with Melodiya vinyl records and Khokhloma, began to stream through Vienna, heading for Rome, to eventually reach the shores of Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand. This exodus was made possible through the lobbying and generosity of North American Jews who helped rescue their mesh-puha through organizations like JIAS, HIAS and the American Joint Distribution Committee.

David Bezmozgis was one such beneficiary. He was just six when his family left Soviet Latvia and he has written a fictionalized account of this heady, yet difficult exodus. I was another. I was eight when my family travelled the exact same immigration route at exactly the same time as the events depicted in Bezmozgis's *The Free World*. Bezmozgis' ambitious novel has its roots in the quintessential Jewish story, the Book of Exodus, although his writing is every bit as scrappy as Mordecai Richler's.

It is 1978 and the Krasnansky family has left behind their relatively comfortable life in Riga, Soviet Latvia for the golden medina of America. They are travelling through Vienna, then to Rome where they settle in the adjoining town of Ladispoli, instead of Ostia. "Ostia was overrun by Odesans. Ladispoli was populated more by people from Moscow, Leningrad, Latvia, Lithuania. In short, it was more civilized." The Krasnanskys, formerly Eisner, are not only on an immigrant journey, but are in the process of assimilating. As a young man, patriarch Samuil left the observant Judaism of his childhood and became a communist as a reaction to witnessing the murder of his father and grandfather by the Monarchist Whites. Soon after, the family changes their surname to Krasnansky, "because of its evocation of the Communist color" ("krasny" meaning "red" in Russian and in honour of the Communist Reds). Having left the Soviet Union with his family, Samuil is no longer certain of his desire to continue living.

Karl, Samuil's oldest son, has found temporary employment in a body shop, which serves as a front for black-market activities. In contrast to his own machi-

nations, Karl's wife, Rosa, is rediscovering Judaism by forging a relationship with the Chabad Rebbitzin. Despite her family's cynicism, Rosa is doing her best to teach their two sons the traditions the family lost. Alec, Samuil's second son, seeks escape from the boredom of the immigrant predicament in voluptuous 18-year-old Masha. Then there's Polina, Alec's non-Jewish wife, who's not entirely blameless in her uncertain future as she's chosen to ricochet into a flimsy second marriage from a flimsy first marriage that ended on account of her affair with Alec.

Of course, it's not easy to disengage from one's roots, then one's land and expect familial harmony. But the modern-day struggles of the Krasnansky's four-month sojourn in Rome may not be that different from the struggles of the ancient Hebrews wandering the Sinai desert for 40 years. The Haggadah does explicitly state, "In every generation each of us should feel as though he or she personally went forth from Egypt." Some generations just happen to be unlucky enough to actually have been part of such an experience. The Krasnansky's Italian sojourn is set against the backdrop of 1978, the year when the Vatican has a succession of three popes, Rome is paralyzed with constant train strikes and Menachem Begin, Jimmy Carter and Anwar Sadat are in peace talks.

Bezmozgis gives the story life by writing about immigrant activities. One scene describes the fate of all those Melodiya vinyl records and Khokhloma that would make their way to the Americana market in Rome. My father, Ilya, was an electrical engineer before we left the USSR. But when we were penniless refugees, he would rise early on Sunday mornings and leave with heavy duffel bags for the Americana market. At night he would return with smaller duffel bags. He wanted to write about this time and when he was about the age I am now began work-



Photo courtesy of the Karshenbaum family. Ilya, Irena and Esmeralda Karshenbaum on a day trip in Rome on February 2, 1979, a month before immigrating to Canada



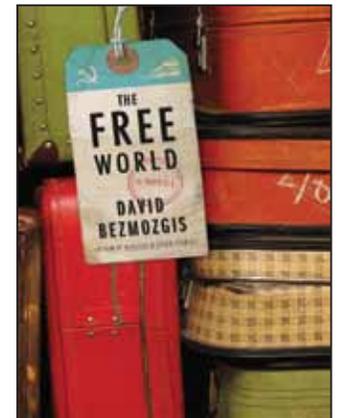
David Bezmozgis

ing on a manuscript. No book ever materialized. He told me years later that he read back what he wrote and then destroyed the manuscript. He intended to try writing again in his retirement. Only he never reached retirement. With the publication of *The Free World*, Bezmozgis has fulfilled not only his own writing dreams, but has given a literary voice to the Soviet Jewry movement.

The book ends as it begins. The Krasnanskys haven't arrived in their Land of Canaan, which will end up being Canada, but they have suddenly experienced a tragedy and an inkling of family cohesion appears.

*The Free World* launches Bezmozgis as a spiritual descendent of Richler. Bezmozgis' talent is of this calibre as he has written a tale that is uncomfortable in its honesty, shrewd in its observations, fearlessly creative in language and refreshing in its subject matter. It is the best novel I've read in a long time and not just because I lived it.

Irena Karshenbaum was born in Kharkov, Ukraine. In 1978, her parents brought her out of the Soviet Union. They travelled through Vienna and settled in the less-civilized Ostia before arriving in Calgary in 1979. She's the founding president of The Little Synagogue on the Prairie Project Society, a project that gifted an original prairie synagogue to Calgary's Heritage Park.



### Dear JIAS Scholarship Selection Committee Members:

My name is Yosef Lazarev and I would like to thank you for selecting me as the recipient of the 2011 Michael and Marta Herling Scholarship. Receiving this scholarship will assist and support my goal of acquiring a university education and professional standing in Canada. Currently, I am enrolled as a third year student in the Bachelor of Science degree program (Biochemistry Honours) at the University of New Brunswick.

Without question, immigrating to Canada changed my life in countless ways and motivated all my family members toward achieving new life goals. We all mastered a new language. My brothers and I tried to be cooperative as our parents applied their energies toward providing a happy, safe home for us and re-establishing their careers. Now, as I look back on the challenges we met and overcame, I am amazed and proud of what we achieved so far in our new country and our involvement in the Jewish community and the larger Fredericton community.

In the past academic year I have been studying and working diligently to achieve the highest GPA in my class. I was placed on the Dean's List at UNB for the second consecutive year. In addition, I was selected for an Undergraduate Student Research Award at UNB funded by Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. Under this program, I have been working as a biology laboratory technician with Professor Denise Clark for the summer of 2011. Professor Clark and faculty colleagues have been very supportive. They have offered valuable advice and encouraged me in many ways. Achieving goals brings immense satisfaction and peace of mind, but when your work is appreciated – it adds a feather to the cap.

All the achievements described above were very important in my life. However I am rather young. Hence, I know that the greatest achievements of my life are before me. For now my major goal is to earn my undergraduate degree and be accepted into medical school or enter into a graduate research program toward a PhD in a field of biological science.

Sincerely,

Yosef Lazarev



Yosef Lazarev

### Dear JIAS Scholarship Selection Committee Members:

My name is Einat Menashe and I am a 28 year old student at the University of Manitoba. I am studying architecture and just finished my second year of Environmental Design.

As an immigrant and a student with a learning disability I can appreciate the challenges some people have in their lives. I would like to use my education to make a difference. I would also like to volunteer with Architects without Borders, become a prominent member and help develop different architectural projects for communities in need all over the world.

I know that architects have the ability to change the way we live our lives, and thus I believe that architects have a large role to play in making this a better world. Through architecture I hope to bring new opportunities to people in need, making this world a more equal place.

I am proud to say that I am very involved with the Jewish community in Winnipeg. Last year my best friend, Sandra Finkelstein and I co-founded JEW-ish, a subgroup of J-PEG (Young Adult Division) that organizes social events for Jewish people aged 22-35. Moving to Winnipeg we both felt sad that there were no social events for people our age thus we decided to take action into our own hands as we created JEW-ish. So far we have organized four events, with over 40 people attending each event. This is exciting since we get a chance to make a difference in our community by bringing Jewish people close to one another, closer to the community and closer to Judaism.



Einat Menashe

As a newcomer myself, I know that there are many challenges to face upon arrival. Through JEW-ish, Sandra and I get a chance to help newcomers ease their transition as we make contact with them, welcome them to the community, offer our help and invite them to our events. I love my community and I am excited to know that hard work and dedication is well appreciated. I would like to use this opportunity to thank JIAS Canada for granting me a scholarship. This means a lot to me as it truly helps me architect. Toda Raba

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## Thank you Anna Steinberg

By Bev Sheckter

After almost 20 years of dedicated service resettling 1200 families, Anna Steinberg retires from her position as Resettlement and Integration Coordinator at Jewish Family Service Calgary.

In 1980, Anna moved to Calgary from Montreal with her husband Jan and three children. Their fourth child was born in Calgary. Initially she established a little store at home and participated in the Eleanor Roosevelt chapter of Calgary Hadassah Wizo. Jan also helped her fundraise for CHW while her children attended Calgary Jewish Academy. Anna, herself, was a Soviet immigrant so she understood the very difficult steps to resettlement. She learned from her parents the importance of giving back to the community and because of her background she knew that this position was a good fit for her. Among Anna's many successes, she initially prioritized the "Family to Family" program which had Canadian families "adopt" immigrant families of similar size, ages and professional backgrounds to assist with practical problems coming to a new country. All the families involved gained from getting to know new cultures and lending a hand. It was the informal get-togethers celebrating Jewish holidays that gave new immigrants the opportunity to meet and mingle. During these occasions many friendships were fostered that are lasting to this day. To those that practiced Judaism in Russia, JFSC opened a door to participation in child education, synagogue attendance and the Jewish Centre. We were instrumental in encouraging Jewish ritual practice, adult education and integration into the Jewish Community. Although the numbers are small compared to larger centres, through JFSC's encouragement, there are many Jewish and non-Jewish Russian speaking immigrants who attended our holiday

and summer outing programs.

Anna is very proud of the "Ethics and Leadership" program for immigrant youth

that she developed and implemented thanks to the funding from the Sheldon Chumir Foundation. Held at Camp B'nai Brith-Riback, the participants and presenters agonized over topics ranging from the importance of volunteerism to Jewish ethics and the Middle East. The main goal of the program was to discuss the obligations and responsibilities as citizens of a free society.

However, Anna notes that the highlights of her career are in the successes of the children who immigrated with their families. Over the years many of them have graduated from post secondary educational institutions and have started their own professional lives. Anna received many letters of gratitude for her constant care and attention to children of newcomer families whether it was for help in sending their child to camp or to help with their Jewish education or applying for a JIAS scholarship for university.

In 2004, Anna was recognized in a special event of Calgary Immigrant Women's Association to celebrate several women who had made a significant and noteworthy impact on the lives of immigrants. These women were acknowledged as being "especially exceptional because they have helped build a foundation and continue to increase the quality of lives for thousands of newcomers and Calgarians."

Anna represented JFSC on many committees and ensured that the community was well aware of the work that the agency does for immigrants. The clients who have been blessed with her service call her "family" and

the Board and Staff of JFSC feel honoured to have been a part of her life. We all wish her good health and much happiness in her next journey.



Anna Steinberg

**YES**, I want to help Jewish immigrants live a better life in Canada

I understand that my contribution will help JIAS expand its important local and national programs.

Here is my contribution of:  \$1000  \$500  
 \$360  \$180  \$100  \$72  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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I would like more information about activities at JIAS o  
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