



AJL-CANADA NEWSLETTER ***JANUARY 2025***

AJL-CANADA EXECUTIVE

Anna Skorupsky, President & Acting Treasurer

Anne Dublin, Membership & Newsletter Editor

Marjorie Gann, Programs

Caroline Ingvaldsen, Secretary

Email: ajlcanada18@gmail.com

Website: [in progress]

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear colleagues and friends,

I'm delighted to express my best wishes for Chanukah to you and your families! May all of you be blessed by the spirit of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, that is shared by all people who love freedom. Chanukah celebrates freedom from oppression. This Festival of Lights teaches us that even a little bit of light dispels a lot of darkness!

Let's hope that the lights of Chanukah will bring us many bright ideas of how to make our world better and happier.

Your AJL-Canada Executive continues to respect our traditions. One of them is by organizing wonderful programs. (See page 5 for information about our next program on January 20, 2025.)

Many thanks to the members of the AJL-Canada Executive: Anne Dublin, Marjorie Gann, and Caroline Ingvaldsen, whose amazing devotion and great knowledge make our chapter so important and indispensable.

CHANUKAH SAMEACH to all of you from the bottom of my heart!

Anna Skorupsky



Your AJL-Canada executive is looking for two people to help with important tasks:

- 1) Someone to maintain our new website. An honorarium is available. If you're interested in this worthwhile project, or know someone who is, please contact Anne at: adublin54@gmail.com.
- 2) A Program Chair or Program Chair Assistant. Your role will be to help our Executive organize future events.

This will entail working with the Executive to come up with ideas for programs, reaching out to prospective presenters, connecting with our hosts at AJL-National, and fine-tuning event details. It's interesting work, as it brings the organizer in touch with people around the world. If you can help, please contact Anna Skorupsky: anna.skorupsky@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP

Renewal notices for 2024–25 have been sent out. Our fiscal year is October 1 to September 30. Stay tuned for an exciting partnership initiative that will be another benefit of membership.

We welcome our new members:

- Maiya Letourneau, Teacher/Librarian, King David High School, Vancouver
- Carson Phillips, Professor, Gratz College, Melrose Park, PA
- Brigitte Ruel, Librarian/Media Specialist, The Ottawa Jewish Community School, Ottawa
- Brittany Lew, Peter Rewega, and Kevin Knopman, Associated Hebrew Schools, Toronto

If you know anyone who might be interested in joining AJL-Canada, please give them my contact information: adublin54@gmail.com. It's not too late to join!

ON THE HUNT FOR BIBLIOGRAPHIES

As you may know, our new AJL-Canada website is “under construction”. I hope the launch will take place early in 2025. If you have a bibliography that you would like to share with our members (only), please send it to me as a Word document. Thanks in advance!



SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBERS



“When we teach students about the Holocaust, we teach them who Jews are, their history in Canada, their contributions to society, and why antisemitism is a threat to everyone.”

— Grade 6 teacher, Simcoe County District School Board

Founded in 2018, Liberation75 is committed to ensuring that all grade 6 Ontario students learn about the Holocaust so they can fight antisemitism and all forms of hate and build a better future for Canadians.

We work in partnership with other organizations to provide the most compelling resources, programs and training to educators to help them teach this challenging subject in English and French. All resources are free.

We believe in measuring impact. In 2021, Liberation75 conducted a pivotal study revealing that **1 in 3 students believed the Holocaust was exaggerated, fabricated, or they were unsure if it even happened.** Even more concerning, **42% of students reported having unequivocally witnessed an antisemitic event.** This alarming data helped drive the Ontario government to mandate Holocaust education in Grade 6 as of 2023.

We surveyed grade 6 teachers to understand their needs and they requested easy-to-use resources, training, and an engaging, age-appropriate book. In response, we created a new initiative called “Ernie’s Books” to provide FREE books to grade 6 classrooms in Ontario. Our committee chose *To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St. Louis* by Kathy Kacer. In partnership with Margie Wolfe and Second Story Press, we did a first printing of 26,000 copies in 2023 and 27,000 copies in 2024.

Teachers must apply for the books and agree to take part in our research study. We were thrilled to receive orders from all 72 school boards in Ontario.



(L to R) Marilyn Sinclair, Kathy Kacer, Stephen Lecce
(former Ontario Minister of Education)

We have augmented the book with extensive lesson plans and resources, teacher professional development, student events, an author/speaker tour across the province, our “Challenging Stories Book Club” and a pre- and post- educational research study (n=22,000) – to be released Jan 2025.

To find out more, visit: www.liberation75.org/ernie.

Marilyn Sinclair, Founder



Kathy Kacer with a group of Ontario Grade 6 students

PAST PROGRAM



Toronto Holocaust Museum

From west to east, Canada is home to innovative Holocaust museums. The webinar on **Monday January 20, 12.30 p.m. ET** will present three of them: The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, the Toronto Holocaust Museum, and the Montreal Holocaust Museum. A representative of each museum will outline its mission, followed by a virtual tour of its facilities and an overview of its educational and outreach programs. With AJL's audience of librarians, archivists, educators and authors in mind, our presenters will also introduce their museums' resources, including books, archives, and other interesting holdings.

Presenters: Hannah Marazzi, Acting Associate Director, Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre; Dara Solomon, Executive Director, Toronto Holocaust Museum and Ontario Jewish Archives; Sarah Fogg, Head of Marketing Communications and Public Relations, Montreal Holocaust Museum. The program will be followed by a Q&A.

Registration link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYocOGrqjlpHdewg5GL7fXnZBfRxylrYOtN>

Margie Gann, Programs Chair

YASHER KOACH TO OUR AJL-C MEMBERS!

ANNE DUBLIN was delighted to give two presentations recently: November 18/24 to the Grade 3 students at Bialik Hebrew Day School (Richmond Hill, ON) about her historical novel, *The Orphan Rescue*, and November 20/24 to the seniors group at Beth Shalom Synagogue (Toronto) about her collective biography, *She's a Mensch: Ten Amazing Jewish Women*.



ANA ESTERIN, librarian at the Gray Academy (Winnipeg) brought the following educational resource to our attention:



My name is Alexandra Broitman and I am the Hebrew and Judaic studies teacher for Grades 5 & 6 at the Gray Academy of Jewish Education, Winnipeg.

I cannot recommend Michal Barnea's *Animal Tales* kit highly enough! This thoughtfully designed resource is perfect for educators seeking creative ways to explore emotions and build emotional intelligence in their students. Each story focuses on an animal representing a specific feeling or character trait, creating a safe and engaging platform for discussions about emotions.

I use this kit with my Grade 5 and 6 students during our morning circles, and it has become an invaluable part of our routine. After reading a story, I ask the students what feeling or character they think the animal represents, sparking a rich conversation about personal experiences and emotions. We delve into what causes those feelings, whether we can relate to the animal, and how we can respond to similar situations in our lives.

The stories are beautifully illustrated and come with cards that enhance the interactive experience. The kit is available in both Hebrew and English, and the delivery process is fast and efficient. I ordered the English version, which fits seamlessly into my classroom setting.

One of the most powerful aspects of this kit is its ability to foster open dialogue in a time of global uncertainty, such as the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Israel. The stories provide a gentle, educational way to help children process their emotions, share thoughts, and feel supported in a secure environment.

Each session concludes with a hands-on activity that I added to reinforce the moral of the story or the key takeaway, ensuring that the lessons are meaningful and memorable.

If you're an educator looking for a way to engage your students in meaningful conversations about feelings, while promoting empathy and understanding, this kit is a must-have. It has made a remarkable difference in my classroom, and I'm confident it will do the same for others.

This resource was created in Israel. It is available in both English and Hebrew:

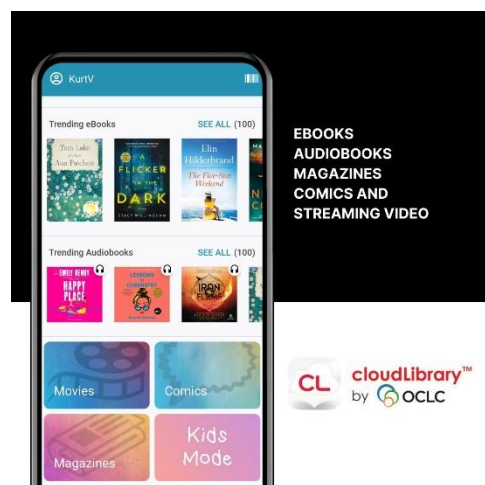
<https://www.animal-tales.com/shop>

And because **ANA ESTERIN** is a generous person and librarian, here's information that might be useful to our librarian members:

I would like to highlight a wonderful service our library began using a few years ago. It's a digital platform called cloudLibrary, and we couldn't be happier with its functionality and scope. We consistently receive excellent feedback about it from our patrons.

I am not getting commissions from them; just wanted to share something that our members are very happy with.

CloudLibrary, digital books platform, offers an extensive selection of audio and e-books, boasting close to 600,000 titles thanks to a convenient Pay Per Use model. Our patrons enjoy the convenience of no wait times on most titles!



Library books can be accessed on smartphones, tablets, laptops or desktops online or downloaded for offline access.

cloudLibrary lets libraries build and share ebook and audiobook collections and provides library users access to digital magazines, newspapers, comics, graphic novels, manga, and streaming videos.

JOANNE LEVY returned from her book tour with co-author Marissa Meyer to find that their book *LET IT GLOW* has become a bestseller: *USA Today*, ALA, CBC, and (drumroll....) *The New York Times*!

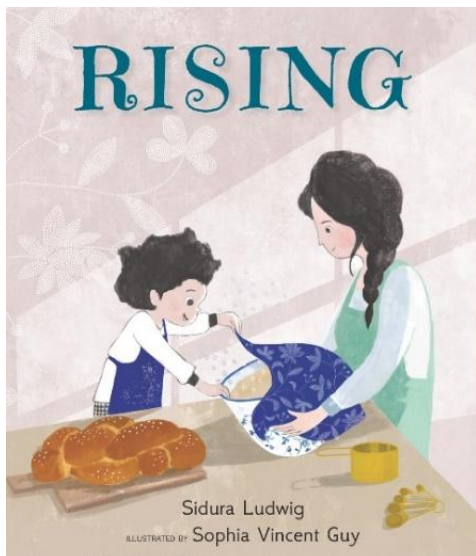


Marissa Meyer with Joanne Levy

Joanne will be heading to Toronto for the OLA Superconference in January where she will be signing copies of *BIRD BRAIN*, a middle grade STEM book about a girl and her parrot, inspired by her and her parrot.

See Joanne at the Orca booth on Thursday, January 30th at 11:30 a.m.

SIDURA LUDWIG won the Canadian Jewish Literary Award (Youth) for her picture book, *Rising*. The award ceremony was held in Toronto on October 27, 2024. Congratulations, Sidura!



For more about *Rising*, please see the October 2024 issue of our Newsletter.

For more information about this year's winners, here's the CJLA website: [CJLA \(cjlawards.ca\)](https://cjlawards.ca)

In addition, Sidura was the feature author at the PJ Library Grandparents event at Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto on September 8, 2024. She presented *Rising* to over 200 grandparents, parents, and children to much acclaim.

Finally, *Rising* was picked by *Kirkus Reviews* as a 2024 Best Picture Book.

[Editor's note: Please see information about Sidura's latest book in the **NEW PUBLICATIONS** section of this newsletter.]

CAROL MATAS had an amazing launch with two other authors on November 28 at McNally Robinson Booksellers, Winnipeg. Sidura Ludwig read from her new book *Swan*, a novel in verse. [Editor's note: See more about *Swan* below.]

Carol read from *Zevi Takes the Spotlight*, a middle grade paranormal mystery. Colleen Nelson read from *Mystery at the Biltmore*, a fun mystery for middle grades.

The authors then had a lively discussion about writing for middle grade—a discussion which people can view on McNally's YouTube channel.

Carol was also a guest on Deborah Kalb's blog. You can find the interview about *Zevi Takes the Spotlight* here: [Q&A with Carol Matas](#)



(L to R) Sidura, Carol, Colleen



(L to R) Sylvia Meier-Kajbic, Carson Phillips, Deborah Lyons

CARSON PHILLIPS received the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Award from *Auslandsdienst* (Austrian Service Abroad). The award is bestowed annually upon individuals or organizations that have shown a special commitment for the remembrance of the Holocaust and the crimes of National Socialism. Dr. Phillips has been a partner with *Auslandsdienst* for 15 years and served as a mentor in the *Gedenkdiener* program, which provides young Austrians the opportunity to work in partner institutions worldwide serving Holocaust commemoration and education. The program is funded by the Austrian government.

The award ceremony was held in Montreal in late October 2024. The award was presented by the Austrian Ambassador to Canada,

Sylvia Meier-Kajbic, and Canada's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism, Deborah Lyons.



BRIGITTE RUEL, librarian at the OJCS (Ottawa Jewish Community School), welcomed author Karen Rostoker-Gruber on December 11th. Karen read her beautiful book, *Don't Invite a Bear Inside for Hanukkah*, to the Kindergarten–Grade 2 students and shared her journey of becoming an author. The students really enjoyed her presentation and hope to welcome her back again in the future.

If families would like to support her work and purchase a copy of the book, you can find it at both Indigo and Amazon, or order from your local independent bookstore along with her other Jewish inspired tales.

NEW PUBLICATIONS (alphabetical, by author)

The Inheritance by **GILA GREEN**



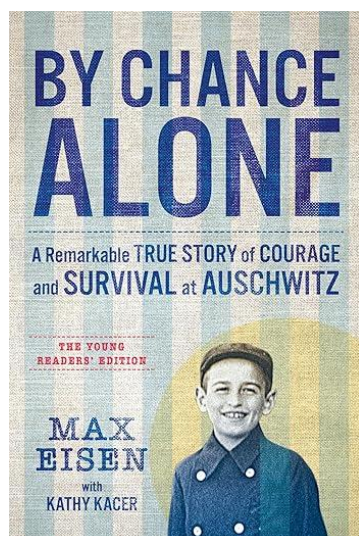
Layne Fortunefield is a busy English teacher, eagerly anticipating the day when she can bid farewell to her sleazy boss, put her ex-con-artist family behind her, and marry her long-distance boyfriend. However, her quest to start a new life in Toronto takes an unexpected turn when a cryptic text arrives, refusing to fade into oblivion. The urgent message hints at an imminent danger for her estranged brother. With her therapist conveniently on vacation, Layne finds herself grappling with a choice: Will she turn a blind eye to her brother's peril and risk disappointing her fiancé, or will she ignore her instincts and risk everything to prove that she's overcome her past and won't let her own brother down, even at the expense of her sanity?

Available for order directly from the Montreal publisher:

<https://www.aospublishing.com/gilagreen>. Will be released on Amazon/Kindle in March 2025.

By Chance Aloneby **KATHY KACER**

(Harper Collins)



The moving, award-winning Canada Reads book from Holocaust survivor Max Eisen, now adapted for young readers.

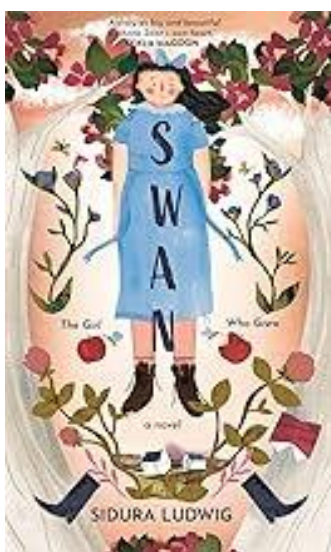
Tibor “Max” Eisen was born in Czechoslovakia into an Orthodox Jewish family. He lived in a compound with his parents, his two younger brothers, his baby sister, his paternal grandparents and his uncle and aunt. Life was far from perfect, but it was relatively peaceful.

But in the spring of 1944—the morning after the family’s Passover Seder—officers forcibly removed Eisen and his family from their home. They, and thousands of other Jewish people, were brought to a brickyard and later loaded onto crowded cattle cars bound for the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

Fifteen-year-old Max lost his entire family, but he survived the selection process and went on to endure back-breaking slave labour and the infamous Death March in January 1945.

Max eventually survived his painful ordeal. And he knew he had to keep the very last promise he made to his father: to tell the world what happened at Auschwitz. *By Chance Alone* is the result of this promise.

To hear Max Eisen’s interview on CBC, see: [By Chance Alone: The Young Readers' Edition by Max Eisen with Kathy Kacer | CBC Books](#)

***Swan***by **SIDURA LUDWIG**

(Nimbus Publishing)

Before she became the "The Giantess from Nova Scotia" and travelled the globe with notorious showman P. T. Barnum, Anna Swan was a young girl growing up near the rural town of Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia. She was desperately trying to fit into a world for which she was literally too big. In her debut middle grade novel-in-verse, award-winning author Sidura Ludwig imagines a pivotal period in Anna's childhood as she struggled to find acceptance in a community that saw her as other.

Sidura toured Nova Scotia and Winnipeg in November, including a panel discussion at AfterWords Literary Festival in Halifax and a launch at McNally Robinson Booksellers with middle grade authors Carol Matas and Colleen Nelson.

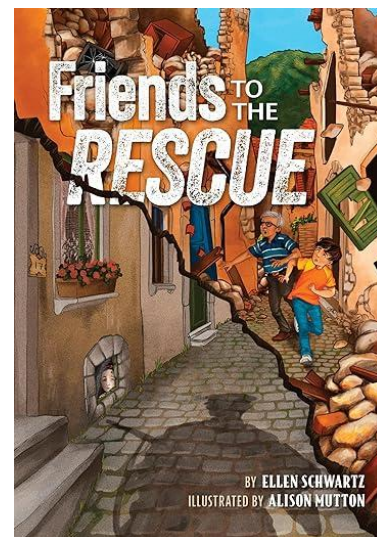
Friends to the Rescue

ELLEN SCHWARTZ

(Apples and Honey Press)

This historical novel tells the heartwarming story of how, during World War II, Italian villagers in the mountain towns of Tuscany hid and protected Jewish families fleeing the German invasion, and how, 65 years later, many of those Jews, now elderly, returned to those towns to help the villagers recover from a devastating earthquake. Aimed at 8- to 13-year-olds, the book features striking black and white illustrations by Alison Mutton. Ellen lives in Burnaby, BC.

In the Fall 2024 issue of *AJL News*, Rebecca Levitan writes in her review, “...this is a great story for historical fiction fans, or children just beginning to learn about the Holocaust and its effects.”



May the lights of Hanukkah bring hope and inspiration, health and joy to you and your families, and to all the world.

Anne Dublin

Newsletter Editor
& Membership Chair