



AJL-CANADA NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026

STEERING COMMITTEE

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

I'm writing this message as the Hanukkah candles finish casting their glow on our Jewish homes and communities for the year 5786. It's been a difficult Hanukkah because of the terrorist attack in Sydney, Australia, but I was heartened to see the courage and perseverance of my family, friends, and neighbours as we celebrated the holiday together. Am Yisrael Chai!

In this issue, you'll read about the remarkable work that the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre (VHEC) is accomplishing, as well as the achievements of many of our AJL-Canada members. Stay tuned for what will be a wonderful program in May 2026 as we showcase our Canadian authors of fiction and nonfiction, for young people and adults.

As the days gradually become longer, they bring us hope and strength. I hope that the (secular) year 2026 will be filled with good health and fulfillment for you and your loved ones.

Anne



- 1) We're still looking for someone to fill the position of president of AJL-Canada. If you think you can offer some time and energy to this not-too-onerous position, please contact me: adublin54@gmail.com. The duties are as follows:
- a. Preside over and prepare agenda for executive meetings;
 - b. Submit a message for the *Newsletter*;
 - c. Participate in AJL-Canada programs, as needed;
 - d. Respond to AJL International correspondence;
 - e. Attend annual AJL International conference, as required.
- 2) Your AJL-Canada executive also needs a Programs co-chair. It's interesting work, as it brings the organizer in touch with people around the world. If you can help, please contact Marjorie: marjoriegann5@gmail.com.

ON THE HUNT FOR BIBLIOGRAPHIES

If you have a bibliography that you would like to share with our members (only) on the AJL-Canada website, please send it to me as a Word document. Thanks in advance!



MEMBERSHIP

If you know anyone who might be interested in joining AJL-Canada, please give them my email address: adublin54@gmail.com. It's never too late (or too early) to join!

AJL-CANADA WEBSITE

If you haven't checked out our AJL-Canada website, I hope you'll do so soon! You might want to dig into the "Members Only" section for more content: Bibliographies, Current Newsletter, Past Programs, and Members Directory.

Here's the link: <https://ajlcanada.org>

NOTE: You'll have to log in and create a password to access the Members Only section. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me directly: adublin54@gmail.com.

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBERS

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE



For more than three decades, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre (VHEC) has been a cornerstone of Holocaust education and human-rights learning in Canada. Guided by the belief that memory work is sacred—indeed, holy work—the VHEC exists to ensure that the stories of the Holocaust are honoured and never forgotten.

Since opening its doors in 1994, the Centre has grown into one of the country's leading Holocaust teaching museums. Each year, more than 25,000 students, educators and community members participate in its exhibitions, in-person programs, and digital learning opportunities. At the heart of

this work is testimony: the VHEC stewards over 215 audiovisual survivor accounts and more than 10,000 archival and museum holdings, preserving survivors' experiences for future generations. These collections fuel exhibitions, lesson plans, teacher training and scholarly inquiry.

Today, the Centre is more active than ever. In addition to year-round school programs and professional development, the VHEC hosts landmark exhibitions that elevate survivors' stories and deepen public understanding of the Holocaust and its contemporary resonances. Recent shows have examined displacement, resilience, post-war migration and the long shadow of intergenerational trauma.

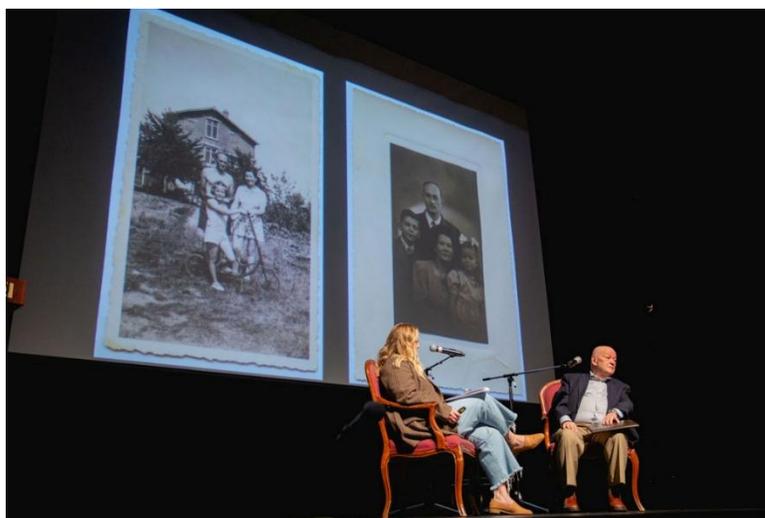
The Centre is also modernizing how Holocaust history is shared. Its latest digital initiative, "Fragments in Focus: A History of the Holocaust", brings the VHEC's collection to

classrooms, researchers and audiences worldwide. Designed for Grades 6–12 and aligned with BC’s Social Studies 10 curriculum, the bilingual online exhibition features more than 160 archival records, including personal belongings, documents, photographs, and survivor testimonies. Through interactive video testimonies and learning activities, “Fragments in Focus” users engage directly with the human dimensions of the Holocaust.

As threats of antisemitism, Holocaust distortion and hate rise worldwide, the VHEC’s mission feels more critical than ever. The Centre calls us not only to remember but to act—to confront hatred and defend truth. Looking ahead, it continues to invest in digital access, community partnerships, and curriculum development. Through classroom workshops, teacher networks and public events, the Centre empowers the next generation to resist hatred and uphold human dignity.

More than an institution, the VHEC is also a community—one built on remembrance, responsibility and hope. Its mission endures: to safeguard memory and ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust illuminate the world we build today.

To learn more about the VHEC, see: <https://www.vhec.org/>



FUTURE PROGRAM

CANADIAN JEWISH AUTHORS SHOWCASE



AJL-Canada will present an Authors Showcase in May 2026 (date TBD). We will feature AJL-Canada members who have published books or articles in the last two years. Many of our talented members write in a variety of genres—fiction or non-fiction, for young people or adults.

We hope that all AJL members and the public will attend as we highlight the new and varied books and articles that our AJL-Canada members have created.

PAST PROGRAM

L'CHAIM: THE JEWISH LETTERS PROJECT

LESLEY SIMPSON gave an informative and passionate talk on **Wednesday November 12, 2025** about what she calls her “little flashlight during a dark time”—*L'Chaim: The Jewish Letters Project*.

NOTE: This program was open to AJL members and the public. The recording is available at: [L'Chaim The Jewish Letters Project Nov 12, 2025](#).

[A note from Lesley:]

Lesley is looking for Jewish wisdom letters, sometimes called ethical wills, from anywhere in the Jewish world. She calls “L'chaim: The Jewish Letters Project” her little flashlight during dark times. There is no fee to subscribe. Hear what Jews around the world have concluded about creating a purpose-filled life.

Subscribe by clicking the following link: jewishlettersproject.substack.com

Please share with friends, family and colleagues anywhere in the world!



YASHER KOACH TO OUR MEMBERS!



(L to R): Anne Dublin, Rona Arato, Brigitte Ruel

[from Brigitte Ruel, Librarian at the OJCS]

On November 20, 2025, the Ottawa Jewish Community School was proud to welcome two prolific Toronto authors, **Anne Dublin** and **Rona Arato** to our school in Ottawa. Anne Dublin spoke to our grade 4 and 5 students about the process of researching and writing biographies. Our students had a lot of great questions and seemed to want to get started on writing their own biographies by the end of it.

Rona Arato gave our middle schoolers a fascinating account of her historical novel, *The Last Train*. The book is the true story of her late

husband's childhood in concentration camps and his subsequent liberation. It was a powerful story and she had a rapt audience.

It was a very special day for literacy at the OJCS!

For more information about these authors' work, please visit their websites;

Rona Arato: <https://ronaarato.com/books.html>

Anne Dublin: <https://annedublin.ca/my-writing/>



Here's an excerpt from **Anna Levine's** Facebook post on November 12, 2025: "Looking at this photo, you think, bunch of old shards, right? Broken pottery, the stuff archaeologists love digging up and tirelessly piecing together. I did too, at first. I was at the Israel Museum yesterday doing research for my middle-grade novel *ROCKY ROAD* (thank you PJ for the author's incentive grant to do the revisions!). On closer inspection, I discovered that these shards of pottery, from the time spanning the Canaanites to the Crusaders, had been reconstructed, tagged, and were arranged on shelves, when a missile attack hit Tel Ashkelon on October 7th breaking these pieces of pottery back into fragments. "Tikkun olam" is about patching up our broken world piece by piece, fragment by fragment, only at times to find that you have to start all over again. While that sounds frustratingly depressing, I'm going to give a lighter spin on it and see it as 'incentive' to take apart my manuscript in order to revise, redo, and recreate a better version."

Joanne Levy's novel, *Let It Glow!*, co-written with Marissa Meyer, is one of PJ Our Way's November picks. We hope that lots of kids will pick Joanne's book!

Joanne hopes to see you at the OLA Superconference at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre where she'll be signing her latest books! On Thursday, January 29th, she'll be at the Orca Book Publishers booth at 11:30 a.m. signing *All the Things We Found* and at the Raincoast booth at 3:00 p.m., signing *Let It Glow*. She will have lots of bookmarks to give out but let her know in advance if you'd like her to bring them in quantity for your classroom or library. Contact: joanneblevy@gmail.com

ola super conference • January 28 - 31, 2026
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BOOK SIGNINGS!
Joanne Levy
Thursday, January 29th
ALL THE THINGS WE FOUND
Orca Book Publishers Booth
11:30a.m.

and
LET IT GLOW
Raincoast Booth
3:00p.m.




On November 10, 2025, **Carol Matas** launched *A Storm Unleashed*. At the launch, the Minister of Education and Childhood Learning, Tracy Schmidt, announced the new mandatory Holocaust curriculum. *A Storm Unleashed* is a recommended resource for grade 6! Also there to support the announcement and the book launch were Minister of Innovation and New Technology, Mike Moroz, and MLA for Tuxedo, Carla Compton.

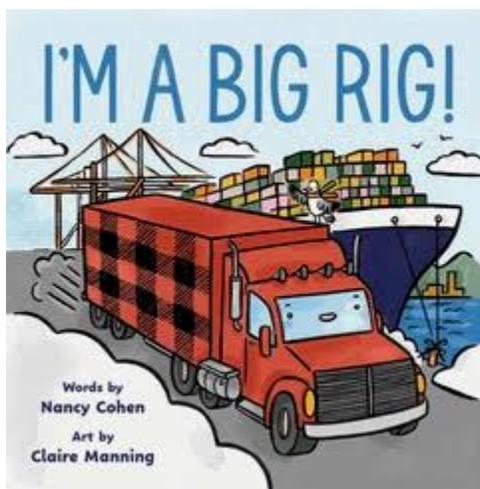


Back row (L to R): Minister Mike Moroz, Minister Tracy Schmidt, Kelly Jeibert, Belle Janieski
Front row (L to R): MLA Carla Compton, Carol Matas

Belle Jarniewski, executive director of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada and Kelley Hiebert, teacher and Holocaust scholar discussed the book with Carol and participated in a lively discussion. The Jewish Heritage Centre sponsored and organized the launch. The Jewish Federation of Winnipeg and Scholastic Canada were also sponsors.

Carol's other recent book, *Kai and the Golem*, received three wonderful reviews from: the Jewish Book Council, the *San Diego Jewish World*, and the *AJL News & Reviews*. The launch took place on December 2, 2025, at the Gray Academy of Education in Winnipeg, with a reading to grades 1–3. The amazing **Ana Esterin**, librarian of the Kaufman Silverberg Library, organized the event.

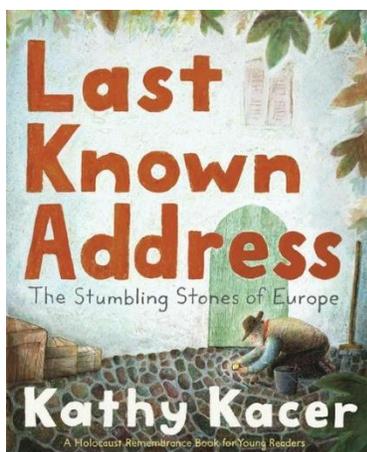
NEW PUBLICATIONS



I'm a Big Rig!

By NANCY COHEN
(Nimbus Publishing)
November 2025
Ages 3–7

Nancy Cohen's fourth book, *I'm a Big Rig*, was released in November. Illustrated by Claire Manning, *I'm a Big Rig* is a fun, rhyming picture book about friendship and kindness, featuring a transport truck trying to get to its destination despite all the other traffic on the road.



Last Known Address: The Stumbling Stones of Europe

By KATHY KACER
(Second Story Press)
March 2026
Ages 9–12

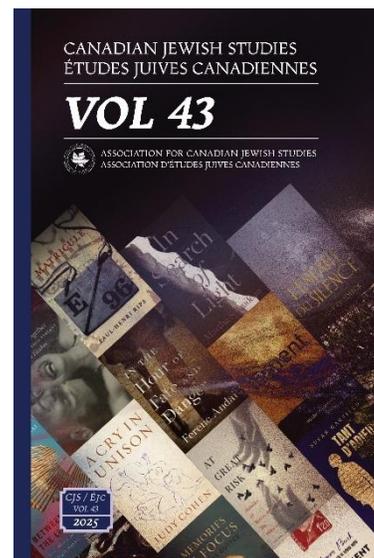
Embedded into the cobblestones of Europe are stumbling stones—small brass plaques placed outside of the last voluntary address of a person who was arrested and taken to a concentration camp. Created by artist Gunter Demnig, these stones are a way to remember that each victim of the Holocaust had a life that was tragically stolen. These small plaques make up the largest monument to the Holocaust in the world. Today, you can find over 100,000 stones across Europe. *Last Known Address* takes readers on a journey across Europe, stopping in various cities to find a stumbling stone and read a story about the individual being honoured.

[Editor's note: I've been asked to create the teacher's guide for Kathy's fascinating and informative book. Look for it on the Second Story Press website soon.]

Carson Phillips published an article titled “[Muted Memories: Reconciling Memories of Sexual Violence and Abuse in Holocaust Survivor Narratives](https://jls.upg-ploiesti.ro/No_1_2025.html)” in the recent edition of *Word & Text: A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics* (Vol. XV, 2025, p. 181–194) (https://jls.upg-ploiesti.ro/No_1_2025.html). The article examines the largely underexplored experiences of male Holocaust survivors who were victims of, or witnesses to, sexual violence as told in memoirs and recorded oral histories.

The Fall 2025 edition of *Canadian Jewish Studies* features an article titled “[Twenty Years of Publishing Survivor Narratives: Scholars Reflect on the Educational and Cultural Impact of the Azrieli Foundation’s Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program](#)”. This roundtable discussion brings together Sara R. Horowitz - York University, Carson Phillips - Gratz College, Doris Bergen - U of T, Zoe Waxman - University of Oxford, Cheryl Fury - UNB, and Sherry Simon - Concordia for an in-depth discussion.

In the same issue of *Canadian Jewish Studies*, Prof. Ira Robinson published the following article: [View of It Was a Dark and Stormy Night: Chaim Kruger as an Author of Serialized Novels in the Keneder Adler, 1927–1933](#). Here’s an excerpt from the abstract: “This article will briefly survey all of Kruger’s serialized novels, and examine one, *Der Froyen yeger* (*The Stalker of Women*), in greater detail. It will attempt to situate Kruger’s novelistic oeuvre in the context of the publication of scores of such serialized novels in the North American Yiddish press in the early twentieth century as well as in the context of attitudes toward popular Yiddish literature (shund) during that period.”



SAVE THE DATE!

The Azrieli Foundation's Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program invites you to launch its newest publication, *Reflection*, by Hedy Bohm




Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 6pm
International Holocaust Remembrance Day
Leah Posluns Theatre

We look forward to honouring Hedy's contributions to Holocaust education with our community partners.

Azrieli Foundation
Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program

CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM
EDITH WEISZENTHAL
March THE LIVING TORONTO
TORONTO HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

Book Launch January 27, 2026 – Save the Date!

The Azrieli Foundation Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program will launch its newest publication, *Reflection*, by Hedy Bohm on January 27, 2026 — International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The program will be held at the Leah Posluns Theatre, 4588 Bathurst Street, Toronto. Program begins at 6 p.m.

Registration will open in early January.

AJL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

“Cooler by the Lake”

Evanston, Illinois

The 2026 Conference will be held Monday, June 22 to Wednesday, June 24, 2026, with preconference events (board and council meetings, newcomers’ welcome, meet & greet) on Sunday, June 21, and optional tours on Thursday, June 25. Conference sessions will begin at 9:00 a.m. CT on Monday, June 22, and conclude on Wednesday afternoon, June 24.

Visit the [2026 Conference webpage](#) for answers to frequently asked questions.

Conference Support. Conference support will be available to current members of AJL and students. See the [Conference Support](#) and [Student Scholarship](#) pages for details; deadlines and the application forms will be posted in January 2026. Not an AJL member? [Join or renew now!](#)

[Editor’s note: A bursary will be offered to attend this conference for AJL-Canada members. The application form and more information to come.]

OF INTEREST

Ana Esterin tells us of a new initiative:

I wanted to share some exciting news I recently discovered. There’s a Canadian supplier of Hebrew books! For many years, we haven’t been able to get Hebrew books since the Steimatzky US closure. I’m sure other librarians would really appreciate having this contact and the chance to order from a local company. It’ll make getting Hebrew materials so much easier and more affordable for everyone.

Lee Laa Lou Inc. is a Canadian family-run company on a mission to make languages and cultures more accessible and engaging. What began as a project to help children learn Hebrew has grown into partnerships with libraries, schools, and community organizations across North America, providing curated Hebrew collections, shipping and logistics support, and a range of resources and tools for educators and professionals—all revolving around our shared love for language, literature, culture, and education. You can find out more about the company by visiting their [website](#), and view their [Hebrew book collection](#).