

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



**NATIONAL
COUNCIL
OF JEWISH
WOMEN OF
CANADA,
TORONTO**
ncjwctoronto.org



NCJWC
Toronto

WHO WE ARE

NCJWC TORONTO ENGAGES & IMPACTS THE COMMUNITY THROUGH RELEVANT & MEANINGFUL PROGRAMS & PROJECTS THAT IMPROVE EDUCATION, SERVICE & SOCIAL IMPACT.

WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM



ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES

GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT, SHEILA NEUBURGER



"Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen."

-Brene Brown, Daring Greatly

I have been honored to serve as President of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Toronto, and I am very excited about what the future will bring for this great organization. We have a long and storied history and a strong track record of successful social change projects. We address unmet needs in our community, we give of ourselves and we are generous with our time. We are concerned about the vulnerable in our community and that they are looked after in a dignified manner. We think passionately and deeply about the future stability and growth of our organization. And most importantly we show up!

My hope for the coming two years is that we continue to build upon success and continue on the path of serving our community in meaningful, impactful ways. I look forward to continuing our work together.

GREETINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ROBIN GOFINE



“Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence”

- Sheryl Sandberg, Former COO Facebook (Meta)

“Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you”

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933-2020) former US Supreme Court Justice.

I am proud to serve as the Executive Director of this wonderful organization! The quotes above speak to me because they deeply reflect the attitudes and values of the talented women that I have had the privilege of working with and come to know over the past 18 months. Their humility, compassion and long-term thinking is helping to set the course for NCJWC Toronto.

The accomplishments of our members and volunteers are inspiring and support our mission: community service through education, social action and social impact. The past year has focused upon the future and engaging our members, our community and a new generation of leaders to ensure the ongoing success and growth of this great organization.

I would like to extend thanks to our visionary and capable President Sheila Neuburger, the Board of Directors and our membership. Each of you has been instrumental in providing guidance and ensuring the ongoing stability and growth of the organization.

2022-2023 NCJWC TORONTO HIGHLIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- > NCJWC Toronto was proud to host the NCJWC Canada Triennial on October 30, 2022 virtually and in person with 40+ participants. The new NCJWC Canada Board and President Linda Steinberg of Toronto were installed. Naomi Kingston, Eva Karpati and Past President Debbie Wasserman all from Toronto were also installed. Later that week, we hosted a reception in honour of President Linda Steinberg at our office.
- > The virtual opening AGM in November 2023 featured screenwriter and author Delia Ephron in conversation with Heather Reisman, Executive Chair, Indigo. Both of these women told important inspirational stories to the 80 women attendees exemplifying qualities of strength, leadership and resilience. The presentation attracted many new faces who had the opportunity to hear from outstanding women and learn about the work of NCJWC Toronto.
- > NCJWC Toronto initiated a Branch Chairperson's quarterly meeting to explore how to work together and share resources. As a result, a program guide was produced and has become a valued resource for our branches and members.
- > The NCJWC Toronto/ Betel Buddy Program was launched under the leadership of Susan Glickman. This is a joint initiative being offered in partnership with the Bernard Betel Center to address the loneliness of seniors. During the pilot phase of the project ten telephone buddy matches were made with Council volunteers after an initial orientation hosted by the Betel Centre. A follow up survey of all participants in the program were overwhelmingly positive and a phase two of this project is being planned. If you are interested in serving on the planning committee or as a volunteer, please contact our office.

2022-2023 NCJWC TORONTO HIGHLIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- > In order to expand the NCJWC Toronto reach and presence, a communications and marketing expert was retained to strengthen the organization's social media presence. An analysis of all social media channels indicates that our social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn is growing through our efforts!
- > L'Chaim entered into a new partnership with Wellspring Cancer Support last May. There are two programs being jointly offered through this partnership: Wellspring/L'Chaim Peer Support for cancer patients as well as a peer support program. Each request receives an intake call, followed by a matching with a volunteer. We have received a total of 18 requests with 41 appointments. There is now a strong volunteer pool of 17 individuals and taking on referrals.
- > B'nei Akiva Schools- Ulpanat Orot High School hosted a program with over 100 participants who raised funds and donated items of support and comfort for L'Chaim women and the L'Chaim/Wellspring Support Program.
- > This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Toronto Jewish Quilting Project. After a two-year hiatus due to COVID, group members re-convened in person in our new boardroom and met weekly to produce over 25 bed-sized quilts, representing almost 200 hours of volunteer time. Fabric and materials are donated through the generosity of Fabricland. Quilts this year were gifted to cancer patients referred through L'Chaim as well as to newcomers and Ukrainian refugees.
- > Our office has been equipped with new conference equipment to enable us to host hybrid meetings (combined in person and virtually) and reach new audiences locally and nationally.
- > We are presently reviewing our current donor and receipting systems and will be making a recommendation to ensure better integration into one platform for ease of communication and more effective fundraising.

2022-2023 NCJWC TORONTO HIGHLIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- > As a result of a Provincial government security grant, we have installed new security cameras and a monitoring system in our office. It is now possible to see who is at our front door from different locations in the office, before allowing entry.
- > NCJWC Toronto embarked upon an exciting strategic planning process to chart our future. As we build for the future, plans are underway to roll out a marketing, community engagement and fundraising strategy to ensure the future strength and viability of the organization.
- > NCJWC Toronto participated in Mitzvah Day on November 20, 2022. Mitzvah Day is an international effort to engage communities in doing acts of kindness in local communities. We successfully collected over 100 coats and other winter gear for Ve'ahavta, over 100 toys for Chai Lifeline and over 75 purses filled with women's hygiene products for the Fill a Purse Campaign.
- > This year, Teaching Awareness through Puppetry (TAP), chaired by Laura Berkley continued to lead workshops virtually and in person. TAP's mission is to educate children about acceptance and inclusion and is grateful for NCJWC Toronto support. Since July 2022 to date, TAP led 50 workshops and worked with over 1750 students, more than 1100 of those students were in the GTA. A highlight of the year featured participation in programming at the Prosserman JCC during Jewish Disability Awareness Month.
- > Through the generosity of donors to our Women's Leadership Circle, we sponsored a wonderfully engaging film produced by the Ontario Jewish Archives about NCJWC Toronto. The content for the film is based upon the archive we donated and that is currently part of the permanent collection of the Ontario Jewish Archives. To view the film: <https://oja50.org/10-national-council-of-jewish-women-of-canada>

2022-2023 NCJWC TORONTO HIGHLIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- > A highlight of the NCJWC Toronto Human Trafficking Awareness Committee this year, chaired by Ena Cord was an invitation to present at the Annual International Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference at the University of Toledo on Sept 22/22. Ena Cord and Eva Karpati presented on The Power of Community Groups in Educating and Raising Awareness About Human Sex Trafficking. The committee is in communication with Jewish Family and Child Services with the goal of future collaborations. This year also marked the launch of A Mother's Day Social Media Campaign – promoting healthy family relationships with the hopes of averting victimization.
- > The 2023 Passover Food Drive was chaired by Gail Crystal and Shelly Feldman, marking the 40th year of helping people experiencing food insecurity at Passover. Meeting in person for the first time since the pandemic and since moving from our previous home, the Passover Food Drive found a wonderful new home at Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue, who graciously hosted this year's packing during the month of March. Over 1000 NCJWC Toronto and community volunteers packed and delivered 3000 food boxes. We were honored to welcome MP Ya'ara Saks among others who toured the site. In addition, our Chairs and volunteers were interviewed by Ellin Bessner and prominently featured in the CJNI print edition and podcast.
- > As we launch our outreach efforts, a meeting was held at our office on the evening of March 23 with prospective new members, to share our strategic plan, hear thoughts and identify areas of future involvement. They are eager to get involved!
- > Under the leadership of Debbie Wasserman, NCJWC Toronto hosted a performance of Gloria: A Life, based upon the life of Gloria Steinem at the Harold Green Theatre and saw the launch of the NCJWC Toronto Leadership Circle. The play provided the opportunity to celebrate NCJWC Toronto leadership who continue to lead positive change and raise funds in our community. Over 100 people attended a post-performance reception generously sponsored by Jeff Chorlton & Family and Flexserv. Past President Eva Karpati engaged the audience during the show, showcasing the incredible leadership-past & present.

2022-2023 NCJWC TORONTO HIGHLIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- > On April 27, over sixty participants attended The Caring for the Caregivers Forum at the Lipa Green Centre initiated by NCJWC Toronto. The panel discussion and subsequent sessions highlighted the needs of caregivers in our community and was co-sponsored by: NCJWC Toronto, L'Chaim, Wellspring, Chai Lifeline, Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence, the Azrieli Foundation and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.
- > May was Jewish Heritage Month and we celebrated the accomplishments of Great Canadian Jewish Women. The complete gallery of honourees can be found at www.ncjwctoronto.org.
- > Building upon the success of Kick off to Camp 2022, we have launched the campaign with the Kids Summer Essentials Fund. To date, almost \$20,000 has been raised including a very generous gift from Miles S. Nadal and Family. Beneficiaries this year children referred through JF&CS and children being fostered through CCAS.
- > One Voice, chaired by Eva Karpati, will be publishing Faith Leaders on the Front Line- Responding to Domestic Violence in our Communities. In development for almost three years, this guide will serve as a valuable resource for faith leaders in the GTA and beyond. One Voice was awarded the Community Grant from RTOERO District 23 for \$4,000.00. In return One Voice delivered three webinars on the issue of Domestic Violence, which are now available on the NCJWC Toronto/One Voice website.
- > The Annual Closing Meeting took place in person at the Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue. During the meeting the Helen Weisbrod Scholarship was presented to a deserving student. The 2023-2025 NCJWC Toronto Board of Directors was installed. Dara Solomon, Executive Director of the Ontario Jewish Archives spoke about the storied history of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Toronto. We will also be screening the video developed by the OJA about our organization.

NCJWC TORONTO BRANCH HIGHLIGHTS

ZION BRANCH, NAOMI KINGSTON, CHAIRPERSON

With a current membership of 23 women, Zion Branch has a rich history of 48 years. Last Fall, we had the immense pride of celebrating the installation of our Branch members, Linda Steinberg, as President of NCJWCanada and Naomi Kingston as Vice President, Communication.

We had the pleasure of commencing and concluding our meetings with delightful in-person backyard get-togethers. We warmly welcomed Marcelle Lean, who captivated us with her review of the movie, "The Sign Painter." Additionally, Marilyn Herbert shared her insightful review of "The Sentence," an engaging book authored by Louise Erdrich. We also had the pleasure of exploring Clara Wasserstein's remarkable journey of leaving the Chasidic world, delved into Hana Werner's enlightening exploration of the "Startup Nation", and gained insights from Chris Vaughan's fascinating presentation on "The Night Sky". Moreover, it was a privilege to meet Rona Arato, who shared her husband's remarkable story as documented in her book, "The Last Train."

Our outings were equally memorable, including visits to the Leonard Cohen exhibit at the AGO and the William Kurelek: Jewish Life in Canada exhibit at the McMichael Gallery. We have remained passionate supporters of NCJWC Toronto's fundraisers. We wholeheartedly endorsed initiatives.

CHAI BRANCH, NOREEN KASMAN, OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON

Still going strong and we will be meeting in the coming year partly in person and partly via Zoom. We are a small branch (about a dozen members). We collect items for Tikun Olam that get distributed to Ve'ahavta and a church at Bathurst and St. Clair as well as blankets provided by Project Linus. We are investigating an ongoing effort such as packing meals at the Betel Centre. Over the past many decades, we have become close friends.

NCJWC TORONTO BRANCH HIGHLIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL BRANCH, PAULA EPSTEIN, CHAIRPERSON

The International Branch has been inactive since the start of COVID in March 2020. We plan to start meeting again in September 2023. We hope to get together next month to plan our programs.

YACHAD BRANCH, ELKIE HANDLEMAN & JOAN SEGAL, CO-CHAIRPERSONS

Yachad Branch is thankful that we have retained our membership since Covid and have actively been operational via zoom. We have continued on zoom as we find it suits our purposes better, for example, not having to cancel a program because of a snow storm. We have been conducting regular spring and winter clothing drives for Ve'ahavta and are currently in the middle of one. We have had regular and varied programs and have joined other branches for some of theirs. We especially enjoyed Female Fashion Icons – Jackie Kennedy and then Audrey Hepburn. We enjoyed exploring the current state of Ukrainian Jews and the History of the Chinese and Chinese Restaurants in Toronto. Our member, Sandy Vale's review of the book, "People Hate Dead Jews" was very interesting.

DINAH BRANCH, JUDY CHODIRKER & SHARON CHODIRKER, CO-CHAIRPERSONS

Dinah had a great year of IN-PERSON (finally!) programs including: Two separate talks by two specialized Doctors from Israel who are currently in Toronto doing fellowships at Mount Sinai Hospital. Maru Gete spoke about his family's experiences leaving Ethiopia for Israel when he was 9 years of age and Nana Maklada spoke about her Druze background and her experiences as a result. We all were amazed at their incredible stories and came away knowing much more about Ethiopian culture and the Druze religion.

A Chanukah party brought everyone together including non-perishable items for donation to the food bank. We also had a Talk on "Nutrition for Bone Health" by none other than Dinah Branch's own Co-Chair and dietician, Judy Chodirker. A donation of \$360 from our Dinah Branch account was made to go towards the kick off to Camp Campaign.

NCJWC TORONTO BRANCH HIGHLIGHTS

THORNHILL STUDY GROUP, DEANNA SAMUELS & SUSAN AUSTIN, CO-CHAIRPERSONS

Thornhill Study Group enjoyed another successful year of programs, some by Zoom, joining in with Orah Branch. We enjoyed interesting talks on Save a Child's Heart, Chai Lifeline, Lianne Harris on The Queen's Closet and Nutrition with Marsha Fenwick. Some of our Branch members were present at "Gloria: A Life" at the Harold Green Theatre and at the recent Zichron Menachem event – The American Jewish Song Book, a truly remarkable outstanding show.

Our own member Deanna Samuels talked with us about a China Adventure which included photos and a reading of her poems. Judy Weinryb, another branch member, reviewed the book, The Lost Shtetl.

As part of our Service Project, our branch also helped with some of the supervising and packing during the Passover Food Drive. We are looking forward to this season's Closing Dinner in June and to organizing our next season's programs.

Our numbers are shrinking (we are now between 8-10), we would like to merge with another similar-sized branch. Let us know if any of you are in a similar situation and are interested.

ORAH BRANCH, SHELLY FELDMAN, CHAIRPERSON

Orah branch had a fantastic year of programming, mostly on Zoom, thanks to our great programming committee, Laura Chyfetz, Bonita Josse and Rochelle Frydrych. Some of the highlights were The Queen's Closet with Lianne Harris, Nutrition, Arthritis & Osteoporosis with Marsha Fenwick and The Mikvah with Rebbetzin Goldie Plotkin. This year again, we were delighted to provide the residents of The NCJWC Toronto Foundation Building with seasonal gifts of cases of clementines in December. In November Orah Branch provided Ve'ahavta with toques, gloves and underwear, for Mitzvah Day. The last two meetings of the year were in person.

WOMEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITIES THEY LIVE IN

BOARD MEMBERS



HOSTING NATIONAL AGM



RETIREMENT PARTY



THANK YOU SHABINA



IN CONVERSATION:

HEATHER REISMAN & DELIA EPHRON DINAH BRANCH

NCJWC-TORONTO PROUDLY PRESENTS
IN CONVERSATION:
Delia Ephron & Heather Reisman
Two inspiring & accomplished women discuss life, struggle, loss, resiliency, love and second chances.

Delia Ephron
Bestselling author, screenwriter

Heather Reisman
Executive Chair, Indigo Books



WOMEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITIES THEY LIVE IN

MITZVAH DAY



CHANUKAH



QUILTING



GLORIA: A LIFE



ONE VOICE

FAITH LEADERS ON THE FRONT LINE

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES
A GUIDE FOR FAITH LEADERS



WELLSPRING & L'CHAIM



WOMEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITIES THEY LIVE IN

PASSOVER FOOD DRIVE



WOMEN 2 WOMEN



ZION BRANCH



WOMAN POWERED. VOLUNTEER DRIVEN. DEDICATED TO: COMMUNITY. ADVOCACY. EDUCATION. LEADERSHIP.

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