AFTER four years of work by a dedicated group of volunteers, the Little Synagogue on the Prairie, also known as the Montefiore Institute, finally settled into its new home at Heritage Park this summer – and proved to be one of the most visited buildings at the park.

The grand opening of The Little Synagogue, which was held on Sunday, June 28, 2009, was a major event in Calgary’s history. Close to 2,000 people attended the celebration. Among the dignitaries were the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Honourable Norman Kwong, and Mrs. Kwong, Member of Parliament Lee Richardson, Attorney General and Minister of Justice Alison Redford, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit Lindsay Blackett, Mayor Dave Bronconnier, MLAs Wayne Cao, Harry Chase, Dave Rodney, Aldermen Joe Ceci, Andre Chabot, Diane Colley-Urquhart, Joe Connelly, Linda Fox-Mellway, Bob Hawkesworth, Ray Jones, Gord Lowe, John Mar, Ric McIvor, Brian Pincott and Jim Stevenson. At the grand opening, dignitaries spoke, children and seniors sang, visitors ate, danced, and enjoyed their first glimpse of the restored Montefiore Institute.

The celebration capped off the Little Synagogue on the Prairie Project, a unique 4-year grassroots effort that started off with a small group of volunteers who were determined to see a synagogue at Heritage Park. The project captured the interest and imagination of many Calgarians and people from all backgrounds and skills soon became involved. Some raised the funds, some worked on the restoration. Some built furniture, some sewed pieces to adorn the little synagogue. Some made watercolor paintings and miniature metal art. Children created art and songs inspired by the project.

Yasher Koach to Irena Karshenbaum and the board and volunteers of The Little Synagogue on the Prairie Society for their success and congratulations to Heritage Park on being the first historic park to include a synagogue.