

Intro Music

Our history is our Treasure. Treasure that we keep in a humble, bursting at the seams archive at the Jewish Federation of Ottawa. Archives can seem inaccessible but with this podcast, we're bringing the archives to you. Honouring the past is one of the 613 commandments or mitzvot of Judaism. 613 is also the area code of Ottawa, the capital city of Canada, a city that hosts a vibrant historical Jewish community. 613 archives is where we dig into the shelves and drawers of the Ottawa Jewish archives for stories that bring our past into the present. Thanks for joining us. I'm Teigan Goldsmith, your host and archivist.

You are listening to 613archives, the podcast for the Ottawa Jewish archives.

Season 2, episode 1: The Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation.

Intro: *Andrea speaking* *"As a trusted leader and the centre of Jewish philanthropic giving, the Foundation will engage, educate and inspire generations of donors, ensuring the long-term security and financial viability of Ottawa's Jewish Community."*

That was Andrea Freedman, current president of the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation. She is one of 20 people who have served as president of the Foundation since its inception in 1971.

INSERT ANDREA CLIP (4:04 - 4:25) 19 seconds

So I first started working for Ottawa's Jewish community in March of 2013 and when I was first hired it was to be the CEO of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa with the understanding that it was likely going to become a joint role with the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation and this in fact happened several months later.

Andrea's role as president is to work on fundraising strategies with her incredibly dedicated team of board and staff members to elevate the status of the Foundation and encourage the community to contribute to its growth.

The Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation, formerly known as the Ottawa Jewish Community Endowment and Bequest Foundation was created in 1971 by a group of community members who sought to provide a financial resource to maintain the fiscal structure of the community. Today, it is a thriving organization that supports our ever growing community.

The Foundation's purpose is to financially ensure and support the growth and development of Ottawa's Jewish community. "The long-term goal of the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation focuses on the need to ensure that there will always be sufficient financial support for the continued development of a strong and vibrant Jewish community."

The Foundation was founded in the early 1970s by a group of passionate community leaders. The Founders were Gilbert Greenberg, Bernie Shinder, Hyman Bessin, Alex Betcherman, Hy Harris, Hy Hochberg, David Loeb, Abe Palmer, Harold Shenkman, Hyman Soloway, Casey Swedlove, Sam Taller and Norman Zagerman. Each of these men had a hand in creating the foundation and all went on to hold a variety of different roles in the organization throughout their lifetimes. Gilbert Greenberg, the driving force behind the foundations inception, was its very first president, holding the position from 1975 – 1976.

According to Bernie Shinder, the only surviving member of the Founders, the idea of the Foundation wasn't so much an idea, but a continuation of one that many Jewish Communities across Canada had been trying to realize for years.

***INSERT BERNIE SHINDER CLIP* 4:16 – 5:02 (46 seconds)**

“It was not even an idea it was something that Jewish communities had been trying to do for many years. The province did not want a Jewish Foundation. Um, there were all kinds of problems with it. Who was a Jew? How could be a member? If somebody wasn't Jewish but wanted to be a member, would we have to allow them to be a member? And this was right throughout the entire country. There was no public trustee... the public trustee was the person who gave you the right to be a foundation and certainly there was no public trustee in Ontario that wanted a Jewish federation and that was true for every other province as well.”

A Jewish Foundation wasn't wanted. According to the Government, there were too many questions involved in the creation of a Jewish Foundation. Their message was clear. There would be no Jewish Foundation. The resistance didn't stop there though. There were many community members in Ottawa who were opposed to the idea of creating a Foundation. For those who sat on the board of the Jewish Community Council, today known as the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, they believed if people donated to the Foundation, then the UJA Annual Campaign would suffer as a result.

INSERT BERNIE CLIP (5:44 – 6:11)

“There was also a great deal of resistance from the Jewish community as well to having a Jewish Foundation. The Jewish leaders, many of whom didn't want a Foundation. They believed that the Foundation would reflect? badly on the annual campaign. That people who would pay a lot of money to Foundation and would give less money to the annual campaign and they didn't want it.”

Despite the initial reluctance from community members, Gilbert Greenberg persisted. His passion to create an organization that would support the community in good times and bad was his driving force

and ultimately, he won. Ironically, some of those who had first opposed the creation of a Jewish Foundation inevitably signed on as its Founders.

The inception of the Foundation came about, as Bernie says, because of a fluke. When the former public trustee retired and the man who replaced him happened to be someone Bernie knew, he gave him a call to once again discuss the possibility of creating a Jewish Foundation. The public trustee reminded him of their formal position on the matter but Bernie was persistent and asked if there was anything they could do to try and make this work somehow. The public trustee invited him to his Toronto office to discuss possible solutions. After several hours of discussion a solution was found and a proposal was made. It was decided that in this new capacity, it wouldn't be a Jewish Foundation per se, but would be a foundation, and I quote "created for the *benefit* of the Ottawa Jewish Community."

It would become a branch of the already existing Jewish Community Council, and function as a subsidiary of the corporation. This way, donations could be made by anyone, Jews and non-Jews alike, with the money going towards the Jewish community.

Bernie then went to one of Canada's top tax lawyer, Wolfe Goodman and spent a couple hours working out the details and drafting a charter. When he returned to the public trustee's office to look over the documents it was approved.

The charter was signed and Bernie returned to Ottawa with Canada's first Jewish Foundation.

There are many milestones in the Foundation's history. After 50 years, that's to be expected. The signing of the charter on November 19, 1971, and its incorporation under the Ontario Corporations Act, was only the start.

On January 1, 1974, the Foundation began active operations and in that year received its first major donation in the amount of \$100,000. The donation was made by Mr. Michael R. Freedman on the occasion of his 80th birthday. Michael Freedman, we are proud to say, sat as the chairman of the Historical society and Archives for many years. According to the Ottawa Jewish Bulletin, Vol. 39, issue 8, Freedman was inspired by the example of his father 20 years prior, when he established the Jacob Freedman Charitable Foundation. In the article, he expressed his hope that others would do the same. His donation was soon followed by Harold Shenkman, and Bess Greenberg with similarly sized donations.

In 1982, the Foundation shorted its name to the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation which many of you now know, it remains today. In this same year, 10 years after the inception and 8 years after its first major donation, the capital fund had grown to \$1.4 million. Today, the Foundation disperses more that 2 million dollars annually to different organizations in the community and that number continues to grow every year as new people invest.

50 years is an important milestone in any organizations history. But 50 years of saving, investing, and financially supporting the growth of a community, that is something to celebrate. However, even after 50 years, many still don't know about the benefits of contributing to the Foundation. In some ways, the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation is our community's best kept secret.

INSERT ANDREA FREEDMAN CLIP 1:43 – 3:02 (1 min, 17 seconds)

“In its simplest terms, the Foundation helps donors through a variety of different giving vehicles to help them, help the causes they care most about and to do this perpetuity. What this really means is there's two primary giving vehicles of the Foundation. One is endowment giving and the second is legacy giving. Endowments are open with a minimum gift of \$1000 and the donor chooses what cause they care most about so if they're most passionate about the Jewish Federation of Ottawa or they're most passionate about the summers they spent at Camp B'nai B'rith they can open up a fund that will support and disperse money on an annual basis to those causes in perpetuity. A legacy gift works a little bit differently. A legacy gift is leaving a bequest to the community in your will or to an insurance policy but the basic principle is the same: the money, once a policy is realized after you pass away that money is with the foundation. It is invested very very wisely and every year what you care most about receives a cheque with the Ottawa Jewish community Foundation. So it's really a way to support Ottawa Jewish Community forever.”

In the words of Andrea Freedman, “it helps to elevate philanthropy in our community to an entirely new level.” It gives donors the option to choose where their donation goes instead of just donating to an annual campaign.

INSERT ANDREA FREEDMAN CLIP “Best kept secret quote” 4:46 – 5:02 (16 seconds)

“This year we're celebrating our 50th anniversary and on some levels it's still the best kept secret in town. Not enough people understand the giving vehicles, not enough people understand the important role it plays in our community today, and the important role it's going to play tomorrow.”

2020 is really the best example of what the Foundation does for the community. This past year more than 2 million dollars was dispersed to Jewish charities across the city and this money acted as a lifeline for some. The Foundation was there when people needed them most. It's the community piggy bank that organizations can count on year, after year, to support their needs and make sure they're taken care of. Imagine what 2020 would have looked like had a few people in the 1970s not had the drive, ambition, and persistence to ensure their community would be supported for generations to come.

We asked Andrea Freedman what was the one thing she wanted listeners to take away from this podcast. This was her response:

***INSERT ANDREA FREEMAN CLIP* 6:35 – 8:00 (1 min, 25 seconds)**

“I think it’s that the Foundation is for everyone. There’s often a misunderstanding about what Foundations do and there’s this perception that it’s only for the elite and super affluent and it’s not for people like you and me and nothing could be further from the truth. It’s probably the most effective vehicle for someone who has more limited means to make an impactful gift by leaving a bequest as a great example. Through the Foundation, each of us can become philanthropists and not just annual donors. And it’s an amazing feeling. And I hope as people listen to this podcast and as we celebrate our 50th anniversary and more people learn about the Foundation they’ll begin to understand that you can become an impactful philanthropist for as little as \$250 on an initial invest for your child on their bar or bat mitzvah fund. And that will sort of begin to inculcate tzedakah in that child and that will hopefully become a lifelong habit. So that’s what excites me about the foundation, that’s what I hope people take away from this podcast and to take away from our anniversary celebration that the foundation is for you, it’s for me it’s for everyone, and take a look at us, and see if we can help you help those causes that you care most about.”

This year we celebrate the Foundation’s 50th. This is a huge accomplishment, but this is also only another milestone. Another piece in the history of our community’s organizations. Another story to add to the shelves and drawers of the archives. Who knows, 50 years from now the next archivist may be telling the 100 year history of the Ottawa Jewish community Foundation. Which begs the question, will you be a part of it?

Play outro music

613archives has been brought to you by the Ottawa Jewish Archives. This episode was written by archivist Teigan Goldsmith and produced by So Called who also created the theme music. For more information of the Ottawa Jewish Archives find us on Facebook or visit our website at jewishottawa.com/ottawa-jewish-archives. Special thanks to Andrea Freedman and Bernie Shinder for allowing their interviews to be used in this episode, and to Rosemarie Skoll for volunteering with us from home and assisting with the research phase of this episode.

The Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation is proud to sponsor this podcast. Like the Ottawa Jewish Archives the Foundation is dedicated to ensuring the lasting legacy for our community. The Foundation provides donors with tools to secure the future of Jewish Ottawa. Whether you donate now to start a family fund in support of your favourite synagogue or organization or whether you leave a small percent in your will for the causes you care most deeply about the foundation is way for you to keep your values alive for future generations and to ensure the your beloved Jewish organizations continue to thrive. To find out more go to OJCF.ca