

## Message for Yom HaShoah 2020

The Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society was founded in 1983 by survivors of the Holocaust. The founders' goal, realized in 1994, was to leave a permanent legacy in the form of a teaching museum devoted to Holocaust-based anti-racism education. The mission of the Centre is to promote human rights, social justice and genocide awareness through education and remembrance of the Holocaust.

The VHEC has since become the leading provider of Holocaust education in Western Canada, engaging more than 25,000 students annually. The Centre produces thematic exhibitions and innovative school programs and teaching materials, including online exhibitions. The VHEC also maintains a museum collection and archives, and a survivor testimony project, as well as a library and resource centre.

On Yom HaShoah we join communities internationally to remember the approximately six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust at the hands of Nazi Germany and its co-conspirators between 1933 and 1945. It is also a day to pay tribute to the Jewish resistance that took place during the Holocaust. This year's commemoration marks the 77th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

In the mid-1980s, the administration of the Vancouver Yom Hashoah Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration moved to the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre from the Canadian Jewish Congress. The commemorative program was originally founded in Vancouver in 1952 by the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial Committee with the purpose of honouring the memory of those who died at the hands of the Nazis in the Warsaw ghetto uprising. To reflect recognition of all those who suffered in the Holocaust the name changed to Yom Hashoah Holocaust Remembrance Day in 1978.

Commemorative events like this one provide an important opportunity for Holocaust survivors to remember and mourn, and for our community to recommit to our promise to never forget. During this annual commemoration, we mourn the loss of all who perished, honor those who survived and come together as a community to remember and reflect.

The City of Vancouver joins with the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre by declaring in a proclamation that the date of April 21, 2020, is Yom Hashoah Remembrance Day in the City of Vancouver.

The proclamation states that the history of the Holocaust offers an opportunity to reflect on the moral responsibilities of individuals, societies, and governments and that the people of the City of Vancouver should remain vigilant against hatred, persecution, and tyranny. They join our Jewish community to commemorate and honour the victims of the Nazi era.

This year, due to the unprecedented health crisis in our communities and globally, the VHEC is honoured to be joining a number of partners — including the Azrieli Foundation, the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, March of the Living and the Chaim and Sarah Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre — in a Cross-Canada Digital Commemoration program.

The Vancouver Yom HaShoah program is funded through our community's generous contributions to the Federation Annual Campaign and by the Province of BC. Supported by the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver and the Gail Feldman Heller and the Sarah Rozenberg-Warm Memorial Endowment Funds of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

Sincerely,



Nina Krieger  
Executive Director



Philip Levinson  
Board President

## Impact of Holocaust Survivor Speakers

British Columbia students have continually told us that engaging with Holocaust survivors and their eyewitness accounts firsthand is the most powerful lesson when learning about the Shoah.

***“It is our generation that will ensure the Holocaust does not happen again. We are the witnesses to witnesses and that is what makes this opportunity special, so personal. The Holocaust survivors and their stories are irreplaceable.”***

~ Grade 11 student, Coquitlam, BC

The VHEC’s Holocaust Survivor Speakers are eyewitnesses of the Holocaust who address more than 15,000 BC students annually, mostly at schools in the BC Lower Mainland, at the VHEC, and as part of various educational programs, including Symposia on the Holocaust. Our Symposia are intensive half-day or daylong programs featuring Holocaust eyewitness speakers at school districts within BC, with contextualization from an historian and documentary film footage.

Additional quotes from students who have heard a VHEC Holocaust Survivor share their experiences:

***“I would like to say that what you do, when you talk to people about your life, even if it’s really hard — it matters. It makes a difference. It is important and it changes lives.”***

~ Grade 11 student, Surrey BC

***“It was truly touching and forced me to think about life and history And everything in this world a little differently — with more love and gratitude. I am incredibly grateful for this experience and it reminds me to never take anything for granted.”***

~ Grade 12 student, Vancouver BC

***“The victims were no longer numbers in a textbook. We saw another human being able to verbalize the horrible conditions we read about.”***

~ Grade 11 student, New Westminster, BC

***“I felt honoured to be one of the people that was lucky enough to get the chance to meet these survivors of the Holocaust, and to get to hear their stories and pass it on to the next generations to prevent anything like the Holocaust from happening again.”***

~ Grade 12 student, West Vancouver

***“On the day you spoke, it was my 16th birthday. I received many presents. It wasn’t until I was sleeping that I realized that the knowledge of the effects of hatred and importance of love was the greatest present of all and for this I want to thank you...”***

~ Grade 10 student, Langley, BC

***“You inspire me to be the best teacher I can be and in my opinion, you are a true teacher.”***

~ BC Secondary Teacher

***“As Social Studies teachers ... we are tasked with the lofty goal of having students care about what has come before them to shape the world they live in now.”***

~ BC Social Studies Teacher