

JANUSZ KORCZAK

ASSOCIATION OF CANADA



2015 – A YEAR IN REVIEW

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Editorial

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada invites you to have a glimpse into the major events organized by us in 2015. It was a very busy year for the association and we would like to share with you some of this year's milestones, which include:

- "How to Love a Child" the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series, spreading over the 2015/16 academic year, co-organized with the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. Many thanks to the distinguished speakers, panelists, moderators, the steering committee and volunteers. Please visit the Lecture Series website jklectures.educ.ubc.ca.
- The first Janusz Korczak Association of Canada Graduate Scholarship in Children's Rights and Canadian Indigenous Education has been awarded to Mr. Matthew Lee, a doctoral student at the Faculty of Education, in the 2014/2015 Winter Session.
- Our Association has initiated and undertaken a translation of the biography of Shlomo Nadel, one of the three remaining Korczak's orphans, written by Lea Lipiner. The biography has been translated and published in cooperation with the Ontario Advocate for Children and Youth. The Vancouver book launch took place during the Opening Session of the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series and the official launching took place early December in Toronto at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, with the participation of the author, Lea Lipiner and Jerry Nussbaum, representing the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada. The launch was co-hosted by the Ontario Advocate for Children and Youth and UNICEF Canada.
- The Janusz Korczak Association hosted Helma Browsers, a fellow Korczakian from Holland at the Association's Annual General Meeting in July.

For more information about the individual events please visit our new website januszkorczak.ca.

We are tremendously excited about all of these projects which promise to further Janusz Korczak's legacy, as well as to empower a new generation of scholars, policy makers, and practitioners to carry forward the spirit of Janusz Korczak's teachings in the service of children's welfare and their basic rights in Canada and across the world.

Jerry Nussbaum

President

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

“How to Love a Child” the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series was organized by the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada in co-operation with the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia and was endorsed by Mr. Gregor Robertson, the Mayor of Vancouver, **Dr. Krzysztof Olendzki**, Ambassadeur Titulaire, Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Vancouver, **Prof. Arvind Gupta**, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of British Columbia, **Dr. Blye Frank** Dean and Professor, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, **Dr. Gage Averill**, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of British Columbia, **Dr. Allison A. Eddy**, MD, FRCP(C) Professor and Head, Department of Paediatrics, University of British Columbia, Chief, Paediatric Medicine, BC Children’s Hospital & BC Women’s Hospital, **Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond** British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth, **Mr. Irwin Elman** Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Ontario, **Mr. Thomas Hammarberg**, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights in Strasbourg 2006 – 2012, and **Ms. Batia Gilad**, Chairperson, International J. Korczak Association.

The Lecture Series steering committee was composed of:

Mr. Gregor Robertson

Marvin M. Bernstein

Chief Policy Advisor, UNICEF Canada after Krzysztof Olendzki

Dr. Nancy Bell

Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

Author, Board Member of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

Zoe Campbell

Director of Development, Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia

Dr. Grant Charles

Associate Professor at the School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia

Dr. Hillel Goelman

Professor, Human Development, Learning, and Culture and the Interdisciplinary Studies Program at the University of British Columbia

Mari Kesselman

Development Coordinator, Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia

Dr. Edward Kruk

Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of British Columbia

Jerry Nussbaum (Chair)

President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

Dr. Ashley Roberts

Division of Infectious Diseases, Clinical Assistant Professor of Paediatrics at the University of British Columbia

Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl

Professor in the Human Development, Learning, and Culture Program at University of British Columbia

Rabia Shahab

Development Officer, Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia

Dr. Curren Warf

Head of the Division of Adolescent Health and Medicine, Clinical Professor of Paediatrics of BC Children’s Hospital and the University of British Columbia

Acknowledgments

The “How to Love a Child” the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series would have been impossible without the financial support of the Edwina and Paul Heller Memorial Fund, the Consulate of the Republic of Poland, the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, the UBC Centennial Fund, Vancouver Foundation Dr. Yosef Wosk and Mr. Robert Waisman.

I would like to express my very great appreciation to the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, Professor Blye Frank for sharing our vision, and for his continuous support and encouragement throughout this project.

I would also like to thank the following participants for their help and support:

To the keynote speakers, moderators, and panelists for committing their time and effort in taking an active role in ensuring the success of the interdisciplinary dialog to promote the well being of children.

Special thanks to the Children and Youth advocates, Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Mr. Irwin Elman for their enthusiastic endorsement of the lecture series and for sharing the vision for it in the spirit of Janusz Korczak’s philosophy.

Many thanks to Michael Murphy for valuable and constructive suggestions during the planning and development stages of the lecture series and for co-ordinating numerous undertakings, and Kit Krieger for his advice and help in crystallizing ideas for community involvement.

To Dr. Krzysztof Olendzki, Consul General of the Republic of Poland for his unwavering support for promoting the philosophy of Dr. Janusz Korczak as a champion of children’s rights.

To Prof. Andrzej Wroblewski, Dr. Joanna Rotecka, and Nicole Ptinis for advice and discussions, Damian Skoczyk for the graphical design of the brochure, and to Jane Cua for creating and maintaining the website.

My special thanks are extended to the steering committee members, whose dedication and commitment were essential to the creation of this project. In particular I would like to thank the co-ordinators for their hard work in organizing their sessions and to the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada for their inspiration and involvement at every stage of the project.

Jerry Nussbaum

President

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

“How to Love a Child”, the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series, is devoted to key issues crucial to the well-being and rights of children and young people today.

The goal of the lecture series is to foster conversations among academics, professionals and child advocates from diverse fields concerned with the welfare of the child. We hope that the lectures and panel discussions will provide fertile ground for a fruitful exchange of ideas and approaches to improving the situation of young people in all spheres of society.

A range of disciplines and expertise including law, medicine, child welfare and education are represented in this series, and a variety of perspectives and issues will be addressed.

Lectures are offered in the spirit of Dr. Janusz Korczak, a pioneer in child advocacy, a relentless fighter for children’s rights, and a worldwide symbol of commitment to the welfare of children and youth. The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is informed and inspired by his theories, and Korczak’s native country of Poland was a lead nation in the drafting and adoption of the UNCRC. His work and writings as a paediatrician and director of orphanages for 30 years have become inextricably connected with both the theory and the practice of child care and education and his book title, How to Love a Child, serves as the theme for this series.

Many speakers and panelists in the lecture series are long time champions of children’s rights themselves. The lecture series involves representatives from the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Medicine, and the Faculty of Arts at UBC, the University of Victoria, McGill University, and the BC Children’s Hospital, and includes contributions from the BC Representative for Children and Youth, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth of Ontario, First Nations activists, a member of the Canadian Senate, and many other prominent Canadian children and youth rights activists, including children and youth.

Jerry Nussbaum

President

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

Detailed information about each lecture and the video recordings of the sessions can be accessed on the Lecture Series website jklectures.educ.ubc.ca

Lecture #1

29 September 2015 at 7:00 PM

Keeping our promise to children: the relevance of Korczak's legacy for children today

KEYNOTE LECTURE:

Keeping our Promise to Children: the Relevance of Korczak's Legacy for Children Today.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Mr. Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth of Ontario and President, Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates

PANELISTS:

Members of Youth in Care Canada, Canada's national youth in care network: Rachel Malek, James Copping, Jess Boon. All will bring their lived experience in the Child Welfare system to the conversation.

MODERATOR:

Dr. Charles Ungerleider, Director of Research and Managing Partner of Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, LLP.

A summary of the lecture by Cynthia Ramsay, editor/publisher, the Jewish Independent

Korczak's Legacy Now

Friday 16th, October 2015 Written by Cynthia Ramsay

"Children are not the people of tomorrow but are people of today. They have a right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect. They should be allowed to grow into whoever they are meant to be."

Polish doctor, educator, writer and orphanage director Janusz Korczak's philosophy and writing laid the foundation for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Murdered in 1942 at Treblinka with the almost 200 children in his care, Korczak's work and life remain relevant to this day.

Jerry Nussbaum, president of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada (JKAC), was one of the many speakers on Sept. 29 to remind the approximately 70 people in attendance of this fact. "We hold this lecture series in his honor," said Nussbaum, "because we seek to follow his example of respecting children and honoring the whole child."

"How to Love a Child": The Janusz Korczak Lecture Series is co-organized by the JKAC and the faculty of education at the University of British Columbia, with contributions from other faculties, universities, activists and advocates. The first of six lectures was called Keeping our Promise to Children: The Relevance of Korczak's Legacy for Children Today. It featured as keynote speaker Irwin Elman, provincial advocate for children and youth of Ontario, and president of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates.

Other speakers included moderator Dr. Charles Ungerleider, director of research and managing partner of Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, LLP; Marni Point, who welcomed attendees to the traditional and unceded Musqueam territory; Dr. Krzysztof Olendhi, ambassador titulaire, consul general of the Republic of Poland in Vancouver; and Dr. Blye Frank, dean and professor, UBC faculty of education. The most poignant tribute came from child survivor Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, board member of JKAC, author and UBC instructor.

"Korczak has been my hero all my life," she said. Both she and Korczak were among those held in the Warsaw Ghetto. She spoke of going to school secretly until one day two Nazis came in and pushed the teachers around (they were sent to prison) – "we children sat there frozen in fear for quite some time, then the teachers sent us home. The next day, the school was boarded up. And that is what I remember, clutching my father's hand ever so tightly while looking into the cellar through a little window at the now-empty grey room, where once there was life, color and learning. I had lost my right to education."

Her father took her to Korczak's orphanage. Even though the



Left to right, keynote speaker Irwin Elman and panelists Rachel Malek, James Copping and Jess Boon. (photo by Cynthia Ramsay)

doctor was not in, they were welcomed, and she saw the children reading and doing artwork, seemingly happy “inside this space, as if the horror of the ghetto and the threat of the always-impending danger didn’t exist. This was Dr. Korczak’s world.... I had the impression that the doctor also tried to raise the children’s spirits during the terrible times in which they lived.”

She described the deportations; she, her mother and little sister narrowly missing the transport cars to Treblinka when a commotion distracted the guards and her father managed to save them out of the line. “We were lucky, not so Dr. Korczak and his children, who were destined to walk along the same route.”

On Aug. 5, 1942, the Nazis came for the children of the orphanage. While he was offered a reprieve, “Korczak refused, saying I hate desertion and besides, my children need me.

“Father often spoke of that day and how Korczak’s 200 orphans were ordered out of the building and made to march through the Warsaw Ghetto with Korczak at the helm, holding a small child in his arms and one little one by the hand. They were carrying the green banner of King Matthew, the character in his [Korczak’s] popular book for children about a child king who fought for children’s rights.... No survivor who was there at that time can forget the long procession. Many wrote about it.”

Boraks-Nemetz said her father often spoke about Korczak and taught her his principles, principles she followed in raising her own children. She concluded her remarks with the poem “And Still They March” by Yala Korwin, before presenting the first JKAC scholarship award to UBC PhD student Matthew Lee for his work on children’s social and emotional development.

When Elman began his keynote address, he admitted that he only learned about Korczak about 15 years ago, on a trip to Japan, where he was invited to “help them learn about children’s rights and to help teach them to elevate the voice of children.” When visiting a children’s home – an institution that can have as many as 200 children living in it – a staff member mentioned Korczak and was amazed when



Ambassador Krzysztof Olendzki



Dean Prof. Blye Frank



Keynote speaker, Mr. Irwin Elman



The Moderator, Dr. Charles Ungerleider

Elman, a Jewish educator who had worked with children for 20 years at that point, did not know the name.

Elman has since learned enough to know that Korczak’s work and life are relevant. “In Canada today, there are approximately 350,000 children connected to care in one way or another.... Some say that there are as many as two million former Crown wards ... in this country.”

Speaking of his home province, he said there were 23,000 kids in Ontario living in some form of care, 8,000-10,000 permanently (ie. Crown wards, which, in British Columbia, are called continued custody orders) – and they are not doing well. Of those, more than 18% are aboriginal; in British Columbia, it’s 60-65%; in other provinces even higher. “It’s not hard to understand and listen to and hear the echoes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report, and the need to address this over-representation of First Nations children across the country in our systems of care.”

In Ontario, he said, children can only come into care if a social worker (or somebody in such a capacity) has deemed the child in need of protection – from abuse or neglect – and a court has agreed. The children have not done anything wrong.

When the state takes children into care, said Elman, “You’re making a promise to them. The first thing, obviously, is, you’re protected now. The second thing is ... if you’re permanently in our care, we’re going to take care of you ... we’re going to ensure that you’re going to live to your full potential. And, when that child is brought into care, what do they hear? Maybe we don’t say it, but they hear, we’re going to love you, it’s OK now.”

But, he said, only 40% of children in care in Ontario graduate from high school, and that percentage doesn’t vary much between provinces; 43% of the homeless population of Canada have had an in-care experience. Young people connected to care are over-represented in the justice and mental health systems.

Elman shared many stories of his work as the province’s advocate. When somebody

steps up for a child, he said – whether it be a community, foster parents, a group home, adoptive parents, anyone – “the government needs to say thank you, we’ve got your back, what do you need? We’ll do whatever is necessary, because we owe our children a home in which they are nurtured and loved.... That takes a whole different way of thinking about child welfare.”

He has been told, “We can’t legislate love.” His response is, “I don’t think you can legislate love, but I do think you can create conditions in which love can flourish. The government should be all over that... And, to do that, they need to ask young people and they need to ask children and they need to ask their caregivers in whatever form that is.... We owe that to children.”

If we took that approach, he said, if children in care were listened to, they would feel in charge of their own lives. If they knew what was in their files and had a say in what was written there, they would contribute to making policy, they would have a say in where they lived. Social and child-care workers would be trained differently, including respecting all the different cultures from which children in care come. “Many practical, revolutionary things ... would happen in the way in which the system is run if children felt listened to.”

Panelists Rachel Malek, Jess Boon and James Copping – all members of the Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks – joined Elman on stage for a 35-minute Q&A. Questioners wanted to know more about the criteria for a child going into care, how to create a sense of belonging for a child and ensure their safety, how to reduce the number of children in care, the impact of poverty, and which programs in Canada reflect Korczak’s philosophy.

As the final question, the consul general asked the young panelists, all of whom had experienced the care system, “What does it mean to you to love a child?” Boon spoke of commitment, being there for the serious and fun times but also investing in your own education to give back to the community. Copping mentioned consistency in home, support for school, having someone on whom to rely through thick and thin. For Malek, it is to be vulnerable – to open your heart, to recognize that it’s a two-way street, to be willing to go the extra mile for a child.



The speakers



An introduction by Jerry Nussbaum, president, the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

Relevance of Korczak in today’s reality

Most of us here today take it for granted that children deserve respect, dignity, and rights, and we make it our mission to see that they get them. We believe in having dialogs with children and about children and we strive to treat children as friends and partners. But these assumptions are relatively new and in the times of Korczak, the early twenties century, these were radical concepts. These ideas were central to Korczak’s pedagogical philosophy and he advocated and fought for them relentlessly.

JK was a pioneer in transforming our understanding of children, their place in society, and the rights they deserve. We hold this lecture series in his honor because we seek to follow his example of respecting children and valuing the whole child. His philosophy continues to be relevant to the problems we face in the current day.

JK was a man of many accomplishments, but perhaps the most impressive is that he truly put his philosophy into practice. His career spanned many disciplines. As Thomas Hammarberg, a noted defender of children’s rights and former EU commissioner for Human Rights, once wrote, Janusz Korczak was “A doctor by training, a pedagogue by chance, a writer by passion and a psychologist by necessity.” Also an officer in the army, a researcher, and a journalist, perhaps most importantly, for over 30 years he was an orphanage director. There, the principles that he espoused in his writing played out in reality. And, in dialogue [and partnership] with his children, his philosophy evolved with input from their shared experience.

Korczak believed that children should have their place in the family and in society. They should have a right to education, good health, good nutrition, and good hygiene. Each child has the right to be what he or she is meant to be. As he would say: “You cannot make the birch into an oak”. And, he believed that these rights should be universal and irrespective of religion, culture or place of origin. He believed that children brought up in a healthy and happy environment become happy, productive and creative adults.

Critically, for Korczak, children’s rights came hand in hand with responsibilities. Part of respecting children, for him, was to not overprotect them, and to make them an integral part of the way their world functioned, rather than being passive bystanders. These beliefs were manifested in Korczak’s orphanages that were organized as a Children’s Republic. The Children’s Republic had a democratic structure and spirit, and valued the child’s right to speak and to be heard. The

Children's Republic offered children a voice in their society and self-government. There was a newspaper by children, for children, and about children to make sure that the children were not invisible, passive, or without a voice. They also participated in writing their own constitution and establishing a court in which children were judged by their peers.

The main function of the court was to guarantee an atmosphere of security and a safe environment at the orphanage.

The Children's Republic made into a reality the beliefs that Korczak stood for, crystallized in the following quotation:

"Children are not the people of tomorrow, but are people of today. They have the right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect. They should be allowed to grow into whoever they are meant to be."

Dr. Korczak's philosophy and writings laid the foundation for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Korczak's pedagogy is saturated with humanistic values, courage, and openness towards others. He dedicated his life to children and ultimately sacrificed his life for the love of children.

A Reflection on Dr. Janusz Korczak by Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

For the next few minutes I would like to introduce to you a Dr. Janusz Korczak on a more personal level. Mr. Nussbaum gave you a profile of who Dr. Korczak was. And this man wore many hats indeed but above all he exhibited qualities that show what true human values are needed in the world to make it a better place for all-particularly young people.

Korczak was an author who wrote from experience and channelled his thoughts and feelings into stories which characterized and symbolized his concerns with children and society and how one reflects upon the other. He is known to have said that the health of a society can be gauged by the well-being of its children. "You cannot even understand a child," he wrote, "Until you achieve self-knowledge: you yourself are a child whom you must learn to know, rear. And above all enlighten."

I follow this adage in my creative writing courses and in my own writing because I think that writing from your own experience can tell you much about yourself and then it is easier to create believable characters.

What I have in common with Dr. Korczak besides writing from experience is that we were both in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Second World War. He was an aging doctor, and I was a child. My fascination with this man began on a dreary day in the Ghetto in what was literally a prison for Warsaw Jews and where Dr. Korczak fought to keep safe his 200 orphans.

The streets of the Ghetto place reeked of typhus ridden bodies of children who had lost their parents due to deportations, disease and starvation. People's faces everywhere looked haunted by fear and deprivation.

On one such day I was in despair. My little secret school where I loved to go every day with a group of children who had not yet had a chance to enter grade 1, was no more.. I saw across its doors a bar with words on it schule verboten.

The janitor ran out to tell me and my dad that the two kind teachers who sacrificed their lives and took a terrible chance by teaching a school that was not allowed to exist, were taken to the Pawiak prison as punishment. I peered through the windows into a little cellar room where a few of us had the privilege to learn during those awful days to. We also learned to use our imagination by drawing and coloring using the meagre supplies that were available at the time.

We practised a drill. We sat on little wooden crates with tops on them that came off. . We were told that if there was a knock on the door we were to quickly throw all our books into these boxes and leave only the drawings out on the table. The two teachers were lovely young women who treated us children with great kindness but were firm about our work. This went on for a while. Then one day there was banging on the door. AS practised we quickly put our learning materials under our seats.

Two black uniformed SS guards stomped in and malevolently pushed the two teachers around with their fingers causing the women pain. They shouted in German and stomped out. We children sat there frozen with fear for quite some time then the teachers sent us home.

The next day the school was boarded up, and that is what I remembered clutching my father's hand ever so tightly while looking into the cellar through a little window at the now empty grey room where once was life. Color and learning.

I started sobbing so my father put his arms around and said, don't cry, I am going to take you somewhere special. We walked awhile through the ghetto's shabby and dangerous streets,often ducking into corners when we saw the rifle bearing soldiers coming towards us. Then we stopped in front of the doors of a building.

"This is "my father said "the orphanage of Dr Janusz Korczak.



Marny Point welcomes the audience to Traditional and Unceded Musqueam Territory

And by the way his name really is Dr. Henryk Goldschmit," he added, and knocked on the door. We stood there in anticipation...The door burst open and one of Dr. Korczak's assistants invited us in.

I saw tables where children sat, reading, writing and working on projects, just like in my little school that was no more. The assistants were buzzing around helping the little ones. They all seemed happy inside this place as if the horror of the ghetto and the threat of the always impending danger didn't exist. This was Dr. Korczak's world.

The assistant told my father that the doctor was out on errands trying to get clothing and food for the children. The children looked at us, some smiled. I knew they were orphans and so I clutched my father's hand even more tightly. We sat with them and they showed us their art work. I had the impression that the doctor also tried to raise the children's spirits during the terrible times in which they lived.

After we left and were on the street my father pointed to a small window on the second floor. There were red geraniums peeking from the window sill, the only bit of color on a dreary street. Father seemed to have known that Korczak tried to grow flowers in the ghetto.

My sadness dispersed. Father told me that Dr. Korczak was a warrior whose fight for children's rights never ceased. And that he symbolized the hope that despite what was happening around us there still was goodness in the world, a goodness that protected us from the evil of the ghetto and the Nazis.

But there was no more school for me until I turned 12 years old after the war. I graduated from university at a later age and never learned how to print.

The next thing that happened were the deportations. Various parts of the ghetto were raided then closed off and the people deported to the camps. This was the process of elimination and annihilation.

When our building was raided we were ordered out of our home and into the street to join a long line of Jewish people. We started walking in this line that was heading for Umschlagplatz. A depot where Jews were gathered and packed into cattle cars headed for Treblinka death camp. Many didn't realize that this was to be their destination and the destination of the Ghetto orphans..

Here we are in line my mother holding my little sister and me clutching her arm begging her not to leave me, AS luck would have it there was sudden chaos and shooting in the lineup and from the back someone's' arms swept us into an open gate of a building while the line to that Umschlagplatz went without us. It was my father who saved us. We were lucky.

Not so DR. Korczak and his children who were destined to walk along the same route.

My father told me that Dr. Korczak was a hero.

In his last entry in the ghetto Diary on August 4th 1942 Korczak writes:

I am watering flowers. My bald head in the window. What a splendid target. He has a rifle. Why is he standing and looking on so calmly?

The next day on August 5th 1942, they came for the children of the orphanage.

Janusz Korczak was offered a reprieve as he had many friends among the Poles. He was told that he didn't have to go but Korczak refused, saying, " I hate desertion, and besides my children need me.

Father often spoke of that day and how Korczak's 200 orphans were ordered out of the building and made to march through the Warsaw Ghetto with Korczak at the helm holding a small child in his arms and one little one by the hand. They were carrying the green banner of King Mathew, the character in his popular book for children about a child King who fought for children's rights with the elders.

In this sad procession behind Korczak followed the other children and the orphanage assistants. They marched through the Warsaw Ghetto straight to the Umschlagplatz, where they were packed into cattle cars heading for Treblinka death camp, and where it is said they all perished, probably by gas.

No survivor who was there at that time can forget the long procession. Many wrote about it.

When the war was over my father couldn't stop telling stories of Dr. Korczak. Especially, about how he was with the orphan children both Jewish and Christian. How he cared for them taught them democratic principles and upheld their rights, their knowledge of religion and customs. How he often gave them food while himself going hungry.

My father had also taught me many of the principles that Korczak practised and taught his children. In fact, when I had my own children, we had designated a time after dinner in the family room, where the children were asked to state their complaints and figure out how to best solve their problems in the home so that their rights would be noted and upheld.

And so the Korczak legend carries on to this day and never has it been more relevant than these times when wars that are sweeping our world cause harm to so many children. It was the children, Korczak wrote, who always had to carry the burden of history's atrocities.

It is our hope that the flame lit by this great man will burn forever in the hearts of all those who love children.

Lecture #2: Education

29 October, 2015 at 7:00 PM

Janusz Korczak and the Importance of Listening to Children's Voices in Education: Theory, Research, and Practical Strategies

INTRODUCTIONS:

Jerry Nussbaum, President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Dr. Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, Professor in the Human Development, Learning, and Culture program at UBC and the Interim Director of the Human Early Learning Partnership in the School of Population and Public Health in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia

MODERATOR:

Maria LeRose, Program Consultant for the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education

PANEL:

Robin Kaebe, Salma Rafi and Alexander Corless Grade 6 students, Lord Roberts Elementary.

LECTURE SUMMARY

by Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

Another successful and interesting lecture, 2nd in the series, co-sponsored by The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada and the University of British Columbia Faculty of Education, took place at the Robert H. Lee Alumni Center on October 29th 2015.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl who is a professor in the Human Development, Learning and Culture program at UBC and the Interim Director of the Early Learning. She has authored more than 100 articles and several books.

Dr. Schonert Reichl's focus is on the social and emotional development and the well-being of children as well as adolescents. She spoke at length on being mindful and caring towards children, very much in the spirit of Dr. Korczak's own theories on how to love a child. Her best example was the classroom as the microcosmic world of children where teachers have a very special role in their attitude towards their students.



Maria LeRose, Moderator



Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, keynote speaker

The speaker talked about her own education and how she was seduced by the idea of giving children a voice in the classroom. So she engaged them in decorating the classroom according to their own taste and letting them express their ideas. When the students saw that their opinion mattered, they became engaged. Schonert-Reichl then realized that she was learning from her students by listening to them, hearing, and heeding their voices, thus taking immense pleasure in teaching them. She discussed further how teachers need to have compassion for the children and never shame them thus children would be celebrated and their voices heard.

Following the keynote lecture the moderator, Maria LeRose, Program Consultant for the Dalai Lama Center for peace and Education also an Adjunct Professor at UBC in the Faculty of Medicine, co-ordinated a panel consisting of three young people, Robin Kaebe, Salma Rafi and Alexander Corless, Grade 6 students at Lord Roberts Elementary, who freely expressed their thoughts when answering questions from the audience. They spoke of how teacher's attitude matters; how children need to be heard and seen. Even a hello in the school corridor gives the child a sense of being and recognition. One said that the classroom becomes like a 2nd family and very important relationships are formed.

Another appreciates a climate of comfort and safety. Still another expressed a definition of a teacher as "somebody who asks us what we want to do." Also appreciated was the presence of suggestion boxes as a medium through which the children could express their thoughts and feelings.

Both Schonert-Reichel and LeRose addressed the fact that teachers also need care and understanding as often their very demanding jobs create a burnout.

The panel discussion closed on the importance of parent-teacher communication as that gives the child more confidence, acknowledgment and feeling of security.

Jerry Nussbaum, the President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada opened the evening with introductory remarks about Janusz Korczak and his many various activities in the field of children's rights and welfare and he quoted Korczak, "Children are people, whose souls contain the seeds of all those thoughts and emotions that we possess. As these seeds develop, their growth must be gently directed."

Mr. Nussbaum mentioned the famous Korczak democratic court held in his orphanage for the children by the children. He concluded his address by thanking all the donors, speakers and volunteers.

a keen interest in children's rights, an issue that is deeply important to society as a whole.

A range of disciplines and expertise are represented in this series, including law, medicine, child welfare and education. Today's lecture is entitled, "Janusz Korczak and the Importance of Listening to Children's Voices in Education: Theory, Research, and Practical Strategies". It will focus on the child's perspective on the school environment: their relations and interactions with their schoolmates and teachers. These are essential for a child's path toward adulthood. As Korczak said: "Children are people, whose souls contain the seeds of all those thoughts and emotions that we possess. As these seeds develop, their growth must be gently directed." At the same time he believed that teachers, while directing a child's development, must place themselves on an equal footing with children, and so Korczak also said: "If you want to be a pedagogue, you have to talk with children instead of talking to them. You have to learn to trust their capacities and possibilities."

Having children play a role in creating their environment and school activities and involving them in decision making is crucial not only to their academic achievements but also to their wellbeing, cooperation, open-mindedness, compassion, engagement, willingness to share their opinions with others, their natural curiosity and creative and critical thinking. Korczak strongly believed this and put these ideas into practice by creating a children's parliament and court in his orphanage, the Children's Republic, to assist children learning self-assessment and forgiveness, justice and fairness. In fact, the children at the orphanage occasionally put Korczak himself on trial: for instance, one little boy made him answer for getting on the back of a tram without paying his fare, another for riding down the banister at school. Korczak also began a Children's newspaper to let the children be heard and it became a forum for them to voice their opinions.

In keeping with Korczak's philosophy, we are very pleased to have been able to invite Robin, Salma, and Alexander to participate in our discussion.



Jerry Nussbaum, Introductions

INTRODUCTION

by Jerry Nussbaum

"How to Love a Child", the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series, aims to promote discussion and action on key elements of the rights and well-being of children and young people. Korczak is a historical personality whose life and teachings still speak to the issues that we encounter today. This lecture series aims to keep this conversation, that Korczak devoted his life to, active among those who are concerned with children's issues in their professional lives, such as academics, child advocates and social workers as well as those who take



Speakers and Panelists

Lecture #3: Social Issues

25 November, 2015 at 7:00 PM

The Evolution, Current Status and Future of the "Best Interests of the Child" Principle in the Protection of Children's Rights

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Anne Cools, Senator for Toronto Centre-York

MODERATOR:

Dr. Edward Kruk, Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of British Columbia

PANEL:

Experts in each of the three realms of child custody, child protection and child care: Eugenea Couture, Cecelia Reekie and Beverly Smith.

LECTURE SUMMARY

by Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

The Janusz Korczak Lecture series number 3 on How to Love a Child, took place on November 25th, 2015 at the Robert H Lee Alumni Center UBC. It was co-sponsored by The Education Faculty of the University of British Columbia and The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

This well-attended lecture drew people from all walks of life. Among the attendees were teachers, First Nations, children rights activists, the Janusz Korczak Association members, general public and students.

The lecture's moderator, Dr. Edward Kruk, Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of British Columbia who specializes in child and family policy, opened the evening's program.

Lilian Boraks-Nemetz, author, educator, and board member, brought Dr. Korczak into focus by briefly discussing the fate of children in war zones, relating the topic to Korczak's care of children during World War II.

The keynote speaker, was Hon. Anne Cools, senator for Toronto Center-York, and Canada's longest serving senator. Among her many accomplishments in social services, she founded one of Canada's first battered women's shelters and was Canada's front runner, in the field of domestic violence. She has had a central role in the field of divorce, child custody and shared parenting.



Hon. Senator Anne Cools and Jerry Nussbaum



Dr. Edward Kruk, moderator



From left to right: Beverley Smith, Eugenea Couture, Cecelia Reekie, Senator Cools, Dr. Edward Kruk

Her talk centered around what had been done in the best interest of the child. She spoke about the ramifications in the above fields and how the interaction of politics, government and the law, provide a complex arena in which the child's fate is often lost. Thus her passion has been to work with these factions and act in the best interest of the child.



Senator Anne Cools,
keynote speaker

The three panelists that followed Senator Cools, provided their views, each casting light on a different aspect of children's well-being.

Beverley Smith, representing the field of child care is a long time women's and children's activist from Calgary. Among many honors, she received the Queens Golden Jubilee Award for her work in child care.

She talked about how children's voices need to be heard in the field of parenting and how parents who must both work for a living leave their children in daycare, thus separating the child from being at home with his loved ones.

Therefore, Beverley Smith

feels that women's worth in her work at the home is undervalued by the government, and she refers to Korczak who always acted in the best interest of the child by advocating that children's voices need to be heard on the subject of their own care and needs.

The second panelist was Cecilia Reekie, who is aboriginal and an adoptee as well as a member of the Haisla First Nation. She represents the field of child protection, sitting on many boards, her expertise being in the area of aboriginal culture, truth and reconciliation. Ms. Reekie spoke from the heart and shared her story with the audience. She said that she was lucky to have been eventually adopted by people who became caring and supportive parents, thus enabling her to grow and succeed in life. However, she claims, her good luck was not the case for many other aboriginal children, in fact she said, "indigenous children are disproportionately represented in the child protection/welfare system across Canada..."

The third and last panelist, Eugenea Couture, is an author, mentor and advocate for child custody law reform. She is the recipient of the 2014 YMCA Power of Peace Medal and the 2014 Foster Children's Day Award. Because of her own experience of having gone through divorce and trials of child custody, she says she knows how divorce often becomes a war zone and the children its casualties. In her words following the example of her own turbulent experience, she said, "How can we expect a child, who is ripped from their family environment, to feel worthy of love and belonging? It will not matter what they hear, because the backlash of taking them into care already speaks volumes of trauma."

She claims that repeating history doesn't work.

In conclusion, then lecture ended, the spirit of Janusz Korczak woven by these dedicated people into the very fabric of their work, thoughts, ideas and words.

The next lecture, no 4, will be held on January 21st, 2016, with Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth.

INTRODUCTION

by Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

Big welcome on behalf of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada and the University of British Columbia Faculty of Education

Since it is in the spirit of Korczak's ideology that these lectures are offered, we hope never to lose sight of his message, the core of which is to fight for the rights of children and their well being. - To respect and cherish them. To acknowledge and support them.

As many of you may know by now Korczak's entire life was devoted to children.

He was a champion of children's rights who looked after orphans, went to court to fight for them. In the times when children were supposed to be seen not heard Korczak found venues which gave children a voice... , He ran a radio program in which he encouraged young people to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings and speak freely about their problems.

He published a little review for the children by the children about children. He looked after children in the war zone during the Second World War.

His books and stories reflected his message on how to love a child that went out to society at large and recorded ideas that are still relevant in modern times. And I quote in translation from the Polish what Korczak wrote as long ago as 1933:

"What a tragedy is our contemporary life and how shameful of this generation which is passing onto its children a chaotic world. "

"This type of a world is frightening and it is a world which we cannot allow. So it should be forbidden to leave a messy world such as this to our children. "



Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

Furthermore he writes "To repair this world one should first of all begin by repairing the well-being of its children."

But what has changed?

Today there are many wars, terror reigns, displacement and chaos. Even in the peaceful countries children sense this through the messages on the media and what they hear at home about the fear in the world.

And how will the children in today's society and those in the war zones grow up into decent, happy and undamaged human beings?

And I know what it is like to be a war child, in the war zone, pursued, persecuted deprived of basic human rights.

To be separated from one's parents. I know what it means to be cold, hungry, homeless, and afraid..marginalized. I came out of my childhood experience of WWII damaged...confused, frozen. After the war there were no Korczaks who would listen to us survivors, no counselors and our parents were far too busy building new lives.

But in some ways I was lucky. My Korczak was my father, who knew the old doctor and loved his ideology which my father practiced on me in many respects but for a brief moment because he died soon after the war and I had to carry on alone internalizing my experiences which the adults ignored and would not listen. At that time there was no counseling for us immigrant kids, and North American Psychiatry miserably failed in its inability to understand the trauma of a war child.

But at least I felt lucky again to have come to Canada where we could be free and safe where I was able to pursue an education with the help of understanding teachers, find friends and make a life for myself. In this climate I was slowly able to find healing, though never completely and even that took a very long time. But I was able to regain some part of myself I had lost during the war. And I never take this for granted but am thankful every day for the gifts I have been given.

But I often wonder with horror what Dr. Korczak would think of our world today if he could see and hear the daily news?

We need people like him to soothe the suffering of children, assuage their loneliness, feelings of rejection and fear. We need to work hard to make our children understand that despite the evil there is also kindness and respect, opportunities for the betterment of their lives unhampered by prejudice, racism and hate and above all war.

These lectures on How To Love a Child that largely owe their inception to Jerry Nussbaum, make one realize that there are wonderful people who have come aboard and are dedicated to these causes and involved in the process of working with children and on their behalf: the professionals, the planners, the co-ordinators, key note speakers, and panelists all involved today and every day with the welfare of children.

THIS IS PROGRESS, AND I AM LOOKING AT IT THROUGH THE EYES OF ONE WHO HAS REGAINED HOPE.

In conclusion I would like to read to you a poem, written by Richard Mirabel, a Polish poet who lived in Korczak's time, knew him and I believe even helped him with the publication of the Little Review.

Part 4 - from *In Memoriam to Janusz Korczak*

by Richard Mirabel

He is not gone

believe me

I have seen him outside those gates

Guiding his brood to an open market place

full of ripe fruits and the smell of flowers

I have found him in the smile

of one who beaten down

was lifted up by the friendly hands

of a nameless passerby

I have seen him

in his Orphan's Home

in deep thoughts

lost

confused

alone

And you

may find him

in the forgotten love

of your fellow Man

that Every Man

Warsaw 1967

PANEL LECTURE

by: Beverley Smith

Canada's implementing of the best interests principle

Thank you Senator Cools for your thoughtful presentation. And for keeping issues of children's wellbeing on the radar

As a school teacher, and mother of four I've studied children for 46 years. Dr. Korczak inspires me. His words are vital in this discussion of best interests of the child.

Korczak lived this principle. He taught us that each child is an individual, has rights, is a giver not just a receiver. He taught us that kids have the right to have, express and act on opinions, with his children's newspaper, parliament and children's court. He valued their treasures, heard their worries, let them set goals they could reach. He empowered them.

I fear despite our love of kids, we miss the mark if we forget Korczak.

In history we see that kids have been ignored, abused, forced to grow up fast and alternately indulged and had their right to childhood protected. The role of the courts has evolved to first protect kids from abuses and neglect so rampant in the middle ages and 1800s. But now the courts are noticing parental expertise about individual children, and even asking the child. It is a grey and messy area, with issues of custody, blood transfusions, leaving kids alone unsupervised, allowed and taboo punishments all being of societal interest too. But who speaks for the child is now not just the state, not just the court, not just the researcher, and not just the parents though we must hear from them. It also includes the child.

The word 'best' is a value judgment. Best according to who? The expression 'best interests' shows commitment to kids, but has been used to hide other agendas. The word love can be co-opted. I'm only locking you up out of love. And the wonderful principle of best interests can also be misused. We must guard it.

With a sagging economy, government wants more tax income now. It pressures parents to work outside the home. Though promoted as best for kids, this may really be in the best interests of the tax department.

Women were told work outside the home is the best use of their skills. Yet if tending kids is useless when a parent at home does it, why are those skills suddenly celebrated if done by a third party? Women were told to aim for any career, except a mom at home. This tilting of women's liberation only took women half way. And to be told it's best for kids if women earn away from them, denies women agency to make their own choices. Polls tell us that women differ. Some want full time, some part-time and some no paid jobs when the kids are young. Let people be different.

Dr. Korczak felt taking care of children was his calling. He used his medical knowledge, knowledge of languages and science to teach them, his love of play, his creative writing to entertain them. Statistics Canada estimates that unpaid labor, if counted, would be one third of the GDP. But it's not counted. That's the problem. We are talking about best interests of a group whose care is not even considered part of the economy.

Now men or women can be home with kids, have custody or share custody. I applaud that. But regardless of their gender, the care role is still seen as lesser. It's gender bias with a mask on. It's historical devaluing of women's roles.

Forcing all women and men out of the home keeps the sick longer in hospital, puts the frail elderly, dying and handicapped in costly institutions. It's becoming an untenable health care cost. In the last federal election all political parties noticed this. Finally care of others was part of a budget. But we must move past that insight to not just address the bottom line and what costs least. Aim higher, at what is best for kids.

Korczak said children are 30% of our population and deserve 30% of our resources. Yet education funding is only 14% of provincial budgets. Government wants the reputation of caring about kids, and wants to buy it cheap.

Best interests of the child has been cited for what really are interests of adults. Parents may find it great to drop the child off at 7AM and pick him up at 6PM. That meets the needs of parents for convenience and a safe place for the child. But if you think of it, the child's formal non-leisure day that way is even longer than that of the adult.

Having a universal daycare situation would benefit staff there with guaranteed jobs, salaries, pensions. Unions for daycare workers often promote early education. But notice that union members reap a huge benefit from that. In Quebec uptake of the universal program is huge. Daycare workers seem happy. Daycare user parents were told to be happy. But it is not clear anyone asked the child.

When we look at toys, video games, snack food and glossy ads for kids' clothes we see that children can boost the economy. But as wise elders we should make sure that the product goal is what's best for kids, not what's best for profits.

When diagnoses of mental health issues skyrocket along with medication of kids, best interests of drug companies may be at play. Economist Marilyn Waring says traditional economics counts an earthquake or forest fire as good things because to clean them up creates jobs. How ironic. If we focus only on job creation we ignore something precious.

At the climate change conference leaders will discuss preserving our clean air and water. Similarly we should preserve our human resources and those who nurture them. It would be sad to ignore those till we lost them. With birth rates dropping below replacement level we should think longer

term. Who will carry on? With dropping self-confidence of parents because the state says tending kids is not useful work, we should pause for thought. Whose best interests are we serving?

Dr. Korczak was adamant we also ask the child. Current refugee, juvenile justice and divorce laws do ask children of a certain age. But with care issues, we nearly never ask the child. If a child regularly cries on separation from the parent, or the parent cries leaving the child in the care of another, the state may tell them just to face realities. But if our goal is to enable what people want, why are we silencing those voices?

We are faced with two questions: Whose child is this? and "Who speaks for this child?"

Is this child the property of the state? No. Not in a democracy. The child is not a cog in the machine. Is this child the property of the parent? No. We have by recent law confirmed that the child from birth has rights of its own. Yet the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that parents who spend a lot of time with their children are most equipped to know what is best for the child.

We've borrowed traditional economics terms, and misapplied them to the care sector. Child support is surely more than money but in divorce law it only means money. What about emotional support as vital as financial? I agree both parents should support the child, but that may not be through money from both. We have transferred terms like child care and early education to only apply if money changes hands.. But kids learn wherever they are. Anywhere the child is taken care of is a child care site. We must not let terms of the paid economy take over or ignore other aspects of children's lives.

We have a lot of data now about kids. Yet again, there is a risk. If we love our early interventions, our labelling of kids, we forget Korczak's warning.

Korczak, a pediatrician, did not like labels. He studied sleep and speech patterns but he did not expect kids to develop lock step. He didn't panic over milestones. I'm concerned when new trends even label parents behind their backs. Is a parent in poverty by definition a poor parent? If we label a parent at risk and hand her useful brochures about the value of milk, but deny her money for milk, who put this parent at risk?

If we give little money to help parents do the job well, but rush in with labels when they do it badly, we give the stick but no carrot. If our shelters for families in crisis still do not give money to them, but generously fund the helpers, we have a problem.

Korczak urged parents to trust their instincts about this child. A woman I know had a son getting a kidney transplant. Her doctor wanted her to stay by the side of the child right after the operation, saying in medical experience parents are particularly good at seeing earliest signs of organ rejection.

You can't quantify that skill.

Senator Cools has done much work on family violence. I am glad those voices have been heard. I urge looking now at roots of violence, of kids going astray, joining gangs, dropping out of school, taking drugs. Until we get to the roots, our band-aid solutions and penalties miss the point.

The kids are telling us we ignored something of their best interests. And we can only hope to attend to them if we get to know them and listen. Their biggest need that we ignored was likely that we did not listen.

If you are building a skyscraper, you allow time and space for the construction and respect the builders. If I could leave you with one thought it would be this- . To do what is best for kids we must value their care.. Care of a child anywhere is not a hobby, leisure, laziness. It is useful work, productive in the GDP, in education, and health care.

And this little statement means a revolution. Just like we redefined the word person to enable women to sit in the Senate, when we redefine work to include care roles, we push up against strong other traditions. And should.

Given status for raising kids, parents would have less tension at home, and more money that flowed with the child. They would be empowered to choose the care style they felt best for their children.

The expert on care of the child is partly the child. Dr. Korczak said he learned a lot from the kids. I did too. They taught me how to teach kids to read. The child knows stuff. Listen.

And the one thing we can do as a nation is support the listeners, support the parents. Support the grandparents, sitters, nannies, daycare workers but don't forget the parents. Value the work of taking care of a child as labor force work.

Value it with financial status, with pension rights, with dignity.

The best interests of a child depend on their care being valued.

PANEL LECTURE

by: Eugenea Couture

Child Custody

It is with great honor to be included as a guest on tonight's panel with Senator Anne Cools and all of you. I am grateful to speak about child custody and how this affects families and children. This is a topic that holds enormous depth and time so I will touch on the most important aspects that reflect my view to what I believe is in the best interest of the child.

Having been through divorce and child custody, myself, I know that most couples in a marital breakdown do not want their divorce proceedings to spiral into a war zone or their children being pulled into the middle of parental disputes. In most separations and divorce, both parents want to be involved in their child's life but custody battles can easily turn into a tug of war when there is a failure to see eye-to-eye. There is no such thing as a perfect custody battle and even with the best intentions children can't be shielded from everything.

I would like to add a very significant situation that occurred several decades ago. While I was in the writing stage of my memoir there were signs of deception through child custody whether it was a divorce, foster care or adoption, all three were relevant.

When the last edit was done, the title, "*Adoption Not an Option*," was structured on the biological family and the gravity of what started this journey. Child custody, parent alienation, and domestic violence were meshed into layers of our family generations.

While there is many who dispute *Richard Gardner's* theory of *Parent Alienation Syndrome*, abbreviated as PAS, a behavior in which a child belittles or insults a parent because they have been groomed or have taken sides with one parent to *degrade and target* the other parent.

There is a clear example of PAS when my grandfather was parenting his own children. He may have had rightful grounds to a divorce but he did not have the right to intimidate the mother, my grandmother by exerting control and power. He kidnapped his 5 children and concealed their whereabouts during their growing years. After the abduction, the children's father brainwashed their minds with hate.

Later as adults, the father's coaching behind his critical parenting technique had pitted the relationship with shame and judgment of their mother, a woman they barely knew or remembered. This behavior laid a destructive path for generations of children to come.

Parent Alienation has been under fire by many who claim this does not exist as a syndrome.

A parent's example can mirror into generations. As the children grew into adults, they became parents and some became victims of child estrangement as well.

When my parent's separated, my mother abducted her 3 kids and isolated us from our father by moving to another province. In the early sixties, a mother could over-ride as the better parent because she was a woman.

This does not mean it was fair and in our case, and many other children, it abolished our rights and my father's rights to be the "*male role model*," to his kids.

Children need their fathers just as much as their mothers. We would never know what that meant, nor would we know what life would be... with our mother after my siblings and I were apprehended by Social Services. Without a retainer or Legal Aid, our mother lost her custody rights. There was no legal support or family councillors to help her.

Therefore, my siblings and I, become a Ward of the Government.

Moving through several foster homes...alienated me further away from my parents and siblings. While living in foster care it should be safe but it was not. Violence and abuse was a large part of the foster care system that was supposed to be "in the best interest of the child."

My story may seem like an extreme case but this is going on today. Children are victimized by custody battles and dragged through the court system. When parents can't come to a proper agreement, there can be terrible repercussions with children ending in temporary foster care that often takes years to undo if ever.

Parents are drained of their finances with child support and court systems *eating up* their bank accounts. It is horrific that there are fathers ending their own life because they are paying so much to custody that they can't afford to live.

Spousal support should not be a weapon. This will ultimately hurt the family more.

For the child, having the right to know both parents brings a *divine connection* that can manifest the ability to feel a sense of purpose and love. Providing there is no risk of harm or violence, this is a good parenting policy and serves to what is in, "The best interest of the child."

If there is abuse against a spouse, the children are still victims when they witness violence. Limited parent access or parental supervision may be in place for their protection. If there is family violence, the courts will limit a violent parent's role in the child's life.

If a child becomes *alienated* from both parents through the Ministry of Children or foster care, it could double the isolation that the child is already enduring. They may be safe but their rights can be lost with the estrangement of their identity, which is the glue to their self-worth. With no

links to family, culture and heritage, they suffer an internal dialogue of not belonging.

To a child growing up without their family, the gaps and the unanswered questions, lead to the belief that they give no value to the world. In many cases foster care has been known to do more damage than what actually got the child in care in the 1st place.

How can we expect a child, who is ripped from their family environment, to feel worthy of love and belonging? It will not matter what they hear, because the backlash of taking them into care already speaks volumes of trauma.

REPEATING HISTORY DOESN'T WORK

Albert Einstein gave us one of the greatest theories in common sense by sharing his definition of insanity which is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting a different result.

Taking other people's children is not a resolution. It will not fix the problem.

We should be doing everything we can to keep families together and prevent this immeasurable pain to children. Foster care should be a last resort for youth who will need protection because there are people that do terrible crimes against children.

News reporters are making headlines with endless foster care breakdowns and fatalities. There are countless inquests of foster care homicide, suicide, and accidental death and yet there are more and more kids in the system. A system has been around for decades, still holding the title, in the best interest of the child and yet...it continues to fail as we see the jails filled with former foster kids and our streets lined with the homeless kids from previous care.

Can you imagine if every foster child that grew up and aged out of the system had an opportunity to mentor foster children who are currently in the system? Who better to mentor a child through the foster care system than someone who has been there? Someone that can help these children make the right decisions as they experience life. A mentor could decrease the chance or likelihood of a foster child repeating the past and losing his or her own children to foster care.

Wouldn't this be a wonderful gift for both the child and former foster child? And an even greater gift if they could prevent the generational pattern from moving forward.

It's a very important job when you consider how many child case loads are piling up. If they knew there was a future career, there would be so many foster kids digging in their heels to give back to the community to make a huge difference.

Foster kids hate foster care!

But if they could turn it around to help another child because of their own experience and knowledge, that could be the best empowerment to a child's success. It makes so much

sense because a former foster adult understands what it is like and they get it. If they were hired for their own experience along with added training, imagine the possibilities.

Schools could certainly use the extra support especially with a child in the system or youth that are struggling in a dysfunctional home.

It is almost a daily news event to see The Ministry of Child and Family Development under inquiry for deflecting blame about the ongoing foster child suicides and the endless gaps in the system along with files and documents getting destroyed or whited out to cover for any pointing fingers.

What can we learn from this? If the government took the speech in the best interest of the child and treated every foster child as their own, these children would be given the best obtainable resources to insure they would have the most valuable essentials for their future.

No kids should be lost to the streets or prison. We need to fix their future so they can come through to the other side. The ministry should be doing everything to get these families back in place, not lost in revolving doors of foster homes with no hope of adoption. That's no life for a child.

Let's not leave another child to age out on their birthday without support. Imagine, what would happen if you or your children were put in such a terrible plight?

Can you visualize aging out of foster care with no family members to support you, no job training or emotional infrastructure of any kind and in addition to that, you could have suffered an injustice from numerous things.

How could a youth feasibly be expected to make a living or raise a family?

We are obligated to help every child to shine in its own future because we are all in this together! Your own child could end up in care so let's make it possible for all children to return safely.

Should we not be doing everything we can to ensure that child custody is whenever possible... where it should be, with both biological parents.

PANEL LECTURE

by: Cecelia Reekie

I am very honoured to be here this evening with all of you while representing Forget Me Not Family Society. I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Musqueam First Nation!

As I was thinking about what message I wanted to bring tonight and what I wanted to say, I was given a lot of advice and then I decided to do what I do best and that is to speak from my heart. Child protection is a very complex issue and one where there are no easy answers. I am going to share my story with you as I believe we all relate much better with stories rather than statistics or policy.

I was adopted in 1963 as an infant through the closed adoption system, my biological mom was a 15 year-old girl and a French Canadian background, my biological dad was aboriginal and I went right into care after my birth. My mom was not allowed to see me nor hold me and I was put in the very back of the nursery with a curtain around my bassinet so that if my mom came looking for me she would not be able to see me.

I was born healthy and within a couple of days I was moved to a foster home where I stayed for 6 weeks before being sent to a young Caucasian couple who would eventually adopt me. I was in the custody of the Ministry for 2 years while my adoption was finalized. My adoptive parents were not told any details about either of my parents or their extended family. Was this in the Best Interest of the Child? I do not think so!

As a young girl I adjusted well to my adoptive family and had and continue to have strong relationships with my parents, siblings and my extended family but as I hit my teenage years I really began to wonder about my biological family, who they were, where did they live, were they okay, I also began to wonder about my aboriginal background, which nation did I come from and what did it mean to be aboriginal.

My adoptive parents had always been open about my adoption and had always told me that should I ever want to seek out my birth family they would support me. At 24 years of age I had my first son David, what an incredible joy that was and almost instantly I realized that for the first time in my life I had someone that was biologically connected to me and I cannot even put it into words how powerful that was for me. I decided shortly after David was born that I needed to know my truth, my story and so I decided to search for my birth family. I found both my mom and dad very quickly and all my questions were answered, I know where I come from, I know the family history of both my birth parents and I have a sense of belonging that on the primal level only my birth parents could give me. My adoptive parents were very

supportive of the reunion and they have embraced my birth parents and my birth parents also embraced my adoptive parents and that really speaks to doing things in the best interest of the child.

After my reunion I became President of Forget Me Not Family Society which is an adoption reunion support organization and I had the opportunity to speak at many conferences throughout North America and to hear many stories from birth parents, adoptees and adoptive parents. Some stories were positive and some were just heart-wrenching to hear. I also sat on a committee which worked hard with the Government to open our adoption records in BC, I fundamentally believed that we as infants/children did not sign any consent papers of confidentiality and that it was our right to receive our original birth certificates and our adoption file with all information enclosed, that did happen I am very pleased to say and I believe that was done in the Best Interest of the Child.

I realize and know my story is a wonderful story and probably sounds pretty good and it was and I was very lucky that things worked out. Not all children who are in the care of the Ministry are adopted and those who are adopted sometimes their adoptions do not work out well. I recognize that, and I want to share with you a story of a girl I know who was in the care of the Ministry for years, she had 3 failed adoptions and has many memories both good and bad from her time in the Foster Care system. She never felt the love of a parent that is not in the Best Interest of the Child, she bounced through the system not feeling the sense of belonging or the joy of having family. She deserved that and all children deserve that! Her and I were talking the other day and I was asking her how she felt about an issue that is very important to me, which is photo listing, posting pictures of children who are in need of a home either publicly or on private web-sites, like me she is very much against that and she shared with me the memory of a social worker taking her picture to go into the files of children looking for homes and the social worker told her to look sad, she said with tears in her eyes that she felt like a piece of meat instead of a child. I do not believe that photo listing in any way is the way to promote children in the system; I fundamentally believe that this is not in the Best Interest of the Child. The Ministry of Children & Families must find a different way to link children with families. My friend is a wife a mother and RCMP Officer today and has succeeded on pure perseverance!

I recently read a very interesting article in the Georgia Straight by Laurel Dietz "Reasonable Doubt: Truth, reconciliation, and moving forward with child protection reform in B.C.". The following is a direct quote from the article "Today, indigenous children are disproportionately represented in the child protection/welfare system across Canada. The article sites many statistics that we should all find disheartening and I recommend for those who are interested to check out the article, the statistics are truly staggering. I and many others question whether or not child welfare is another form

of assimilation just as was done with residential schools and that we now know was not done in the best interest of the child. If taking aboriginal children and putting them in foster care is not repeating our dark history, it's hard to say what is. I certainly hope that all Ministries and all levels of Government review the 94 Calls to Action that came out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission this past June and implement change!

I met with someone from an organization in the Lower Mainland, they have a house with a basement suite, the upstairs is used by a parent with children in care and in the basement is someone from the agency that lives there full-time to ensure that there is support for the parent and that the children are safe, why can this not be done everywhere? Why could there not be apartment building, duplexes, and townhomes within our communities which would have all the supports in the building to ensure that the family gets themselves back on track that would certainly be in the Best Interest of the Child!

I also read Paige's Story a report by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, a tragic case of a young girl over many years who was failed by the system time and time again. Paige died on the downtown eastside at the age of 19. This is a must read report for everyone interested in child welfare and how the many different departments and ministries did not work collaboratively for the best interest of Paige. Paige's story should have been the one that truly shook things up with the Government and yet it didn't, when will we all say that losing one child is one too many and it needs to stop?

Alex Gervais is a young boy who dies while in the care of the Ministry at a hotel in Abbotsford. The fear that young people have as they begin to age out of the system needs to be looked at and we need to be able to support them gradually as they learn to become self sufficient adults. As I was writing this I had the thought that perhaps a trust fund should be set up by the Ministry for every child in-care and every month that they are in-care a payment is put into their account that they will receive when they age-out. I wonder would that motivate the Government to do more in finding permanent homes for these children rather than long-term Foster Care, I would think so! I am also concerned and would love to know the numbers of how many children are asked to leave the home of the foster family after they have aged out and are not receiving money any more from the Ministry, I am not saying all foster families do this to their children but those that do, should not be able to continue to have other children in their care, children should not be a money-making business.

In the Best Interest of Every Child in this Province and this Country a child needs healthy, loving, nurturing relationships with their family, even if that is just one person as we all know that family connections are critical to the well-being of a child. They need to know their truth in regards to their

story and they deserve to know that they will always be the priority regardless of their circumstances with their Social Workers and caregivers.

All my relations,

Cecelia Reekie

Ontario's Advocate for Children and Youth and UNICEF Canada mark Human Rights Day with launch of book about Janusz Korczak—the 'father of child rights' and Holocaust hero

Posted on December 10, 2015 at 7:26 pm

Ontario's Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth released *My Life as a Child of Janusz Korczak, the Father of Children's Rights – The Biography of Shlomo Nadel*, by Lea Lipiner. The book launch, which featured an exhibit of photos of life in Dr. Korczak's orphanage, took place at an event co-hosted by the Provincial Advocate's Office and UNICEF Canada in recognition of International Human Rights Day.

As child welfare systems continue to struggle with models for institutional care, Shlomo Nadel's powerful remembrances and photos of life in Dr. Korczak's orphanage (1927-1935) paint a portrait of what is possible – even during war time – when caregivers centre themselves on the voices of young people. Nadel's experience stands in stark contrast to the experience of children in Ontario's child welfare system today.

"There continues to be a gap between the various frameworks, action plans, policies and legislation and the realities facing young people under the province's care with many feeling alone and invisible," said Irwin Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. "We can and must do better by young people. This book provides valuable teachings from the past on how we can treat children and youth with love and respect, and support them to ensure that they reach their full potential."

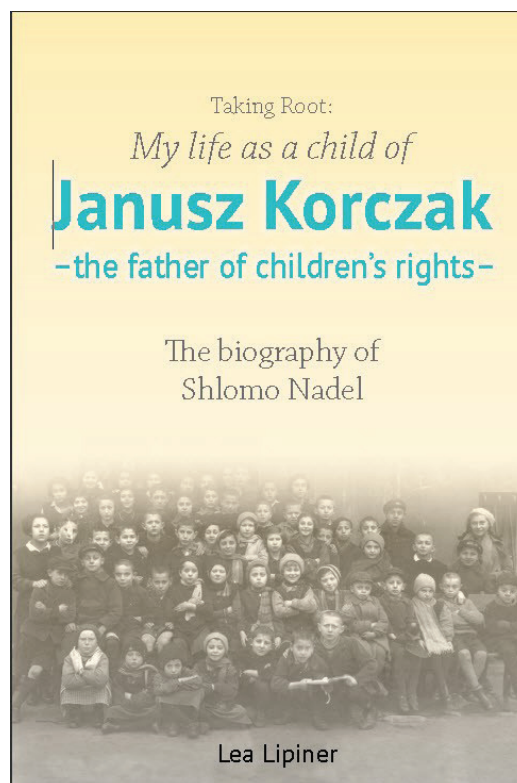
Dr. Korczak was a pediatrician, author and champion of child rights. He is considered to be the prime inspiration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – the most widely adopted human rights convention in the world. Today, the human rights treaty has been ratified by 196 countries, including Canada.

Through the 1920s and 1930s until his death in 1942, Korczak focused on the health and welfare of orphans and created an orphanage in Warsaw, Poland that was built on a unique model of care that resembled a children's republic.

Early in 2016, the Ontario Residential Service Review Panel, appointed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, is expected to release its report and recommendations for the province's child and youth residential service system.

"With the province's review of the residential service system underway, we have an opportunity to make a fundamental difference in the way that we support young people in the province's residential services system," said Elman. "It takes leadership, courage and a commitment to place children at the centre. I encourage the province, the expert panel and service providers to learn from Korczak's teachings and use them as a tool for change. I urge them to ask Korczak's question, 'How do we love a child?'"

The book was launched in partnership with the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.



A copy of the book is available for download (free of charge) on the Provincial Advocate's website at: <http://provincialadvocate.on.ca>

About the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth

The Office of the Provincial Advocate reports directly to the Legislature and provides an independent voice for children and youth, including children with special needs and First Nations children. The advocates receive and respond to concerns from children, youth and families who are seeking or receiving services under the Child and Family Services Act and the Education Act (Provincial and Demonstration Schools). The Office is guided by the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and has a strong commitment to youth involvement. For more information, visit: www.provincialadvocate.ca. For updates, read the Advocate's Blog and follow

us on <https://www.youtube.com/user/ProvincialAdvocate> featured on [Twitter](#) and Facebook.

Quick Facts

- In 2013-14, there were 7,000 children and youth who were wards of the province, living in foster care or group homes.
- There were 1,000 children who were on the path to becoming Crown wards in 2013-14.
- Each year, more than 19,000 serious occurrences are reported to Ministry officials from children residences (i.e. use of intrusive measures including children placed under physical restraint; use of chemical restraint; assault; missing person reports; charges by police, etc.).
- Almost half of children and youth (aged 5 to 17) who live in group and foster homes are on psychotropic medication ("behavioral-altering" drug).
- Numerous reports going back to the mid-1980s recognize that youth leaving care are over-represented in the youth justice, mental health and shelter systems.
- Less than 44 per cent of youth in care graduate from high school, compared to an 81 per cent graduation rate for the general population.
- An estimated 43 per cent of homeless youth have previous child welfare involvement and 68 per cent have come from foster homes, group homes and/or a youth center.

Quotes

"Janusz Korczak was ahead of his time. His exceptional work and ideas concerning the rights and interests of children influenced the drafting of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child – one of the most popular, pro-social and pro-family instruments of international law. . He demanded that the world of adults observe the child's right to respect and love. His famous quote, "*There are no children, there are people,*" is the best example of his fundamental maxim that children are rightful persons and citizens. Shlomo Nadel's biography is a unique testimony of Korczak's life, work and of the hope for peace, justice and equal rights for every human being – both adults and children. Statements given in this book will not let us forget Korczak's role and the importance of his outstanding work as an advocate for children's rights." – **Grzegorz Morawski, Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Poland**

"Dr. Korczak's work and writings as a paediatrician and director of orphanages for 30 years have become inextricably connected with both the theory and the practice of child care and education and his book, *How to Love a Child*, continues to have relevance and important insights today." – **Jerry Nussbaum, President, the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada**

"The summer of 1935 when I was obliged to leave the

orphanage, was for me similar to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden – a painful uprooting. I had originally reached the orphanage from a background of abject poverty with a very slight chance of surviving in the world. No words can ever express how significant Korczak's orphanage was for a child like me." – **Shlomo Nadel, former resident of Dr. Korczak's orphanage**

"True educators see their professions as a mission. They believe in the power of education and learning. They are sensitive to the depth of the souls of their pupils and believe in the potential concealed within each and every child. They create optimum conditions under which their pupils can develop strong roots and thrive in a nourishing and fertile environment, towards their own personal development and success. Janusz Korczak was truly such an educator." – **Lea Lipiner, educator and author**

"Dr. Korczak was a visionary in seeing children as equal and encouraging them to develop to their full potential. For all the systems and processes we need to help implement children's rights, there's little to surpass what is in the heart of a passionate and highly principled individual. We can continue his legacy for children by looking at all legislation and policy through the lens of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the use of structured Child Rights Impact Assessments, which are used internationally and more extensively in some other Canadian jurisdictions." – **Marv Bernstein, Chief Policy Advisor, UNICEF Canada**

"The book was inspirational and showed a side of child welfare that I have never seen before...ever! It provides a foundation for where we need to be in the future. Today's issue is that the child welfare leaders focus on the system, not the child. We are not there yet!" – **Sheldon Caruana, Youth Amplifier, Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth**

"Through disdain, distrust, and resentment, we do not allow children to organize themselves. With regards to our treatment of children, we do not consult the experts: the children themselves. Children account for a considerable portion of mankind, of the population, of nationals, residents, and citizens. They were always, are now, and will always be, out companions. They are the future." – **Chelsea Hopper, Youth Amplifier, Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth**

SOURCE Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth

Biography of Shlomo Nadel by Lea Lipiner Book Launch in Toronto

The event was broadcasted live and can be accessed on the Association’s website januszkorzczak.ca. The book was launched in partnership between the Ontario Advocate for Children and Youth and the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada. The Office of the Ontario Advocate for Children and Youth and UNICEF Canada hosted the event.

The agenda included presentations by Mr. Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Mr. Grzegorz Morawski, Consul General of the Consulate of Poland, Ms. Sylvia Jones, PC Critic MCYS, Ms. Monique Taylor, NDP Critic MCYS, Mr. Jerry Nussbaum, President, Janusz Korczak Association of Canada, Mr. Marv Bernstein, Chief Policy Advisor, UNICEF Canada and youth representatives.

The formal agenda was followed by the book presentation and signing by the author, Lea Lipiner.



Lea Lipiner, the author, and Irwin Elman



From left to right: Jerry Nussbaum, Lea Lipiner and Irwin Elman



Top: Lea Lipiner presents the book

Left: Book signing by the author, Lea Lipiner



From left to right: Mr. Marv Bernstein, Chief Policy Advisor, UNICEF Canada, Mr. Irwin Elman, Ontario Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Mrs. Lea Lipiner, author, Mr. Jerry Nussbaum, President, the Janusz Korczak association of Canada.



The Current

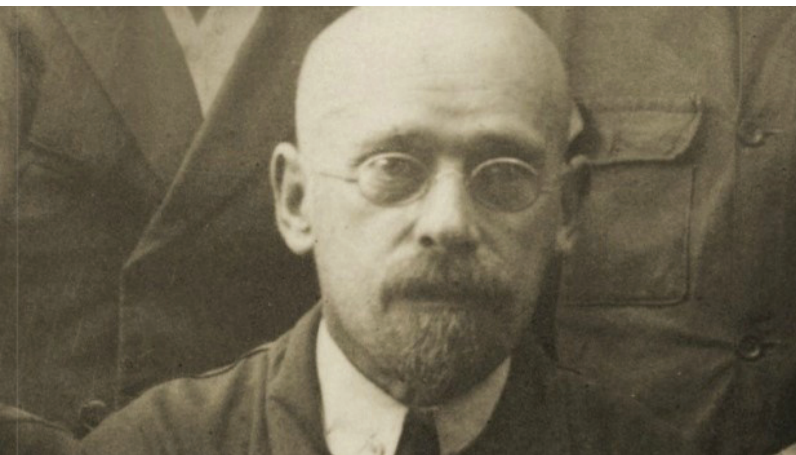
with Anna Maria Tremonti

EPISODES FEATURES ABOUT

CBC: What Canada's child welfare system can learn from a WWII Polish orphanage

The CBC's Anna Maria Tremonti hosted Lea Lipiner and the Ontario Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Mr. Irwin Elman in an interview for the popular radio program The Current.

The program can be heard live on the Association's website, januszkorczak.ca



Listen 21:16

If you've never heard of Janusz Korczak before, you are not alone. He is often called the "father of children's rights".

There is a movement afoot to get Janusz Korczak better known, especially his philosophy of child-care, because some think it's exactly what Canada needs more of right now.

Janusz Korczak ran an orphanage in Poland in the 1920s and 1930s, and after the Second World War and the Holocaust began, he became well known for his brave stance of refusing to abandon the Jewish children in his care.



There's just been a new book released about his orphanage. It is the biography of **Schlomo Nadel**, now 95 and living in Israel, who was one of the children who grew up in Korczak's orphanage.

The book is called *Taking Root: My Life as a Child of Janusz Korczak*.

- **Lea Lipiner** is the author of "Taking Root: My Life as a Child" and family friend of Schlomo Nadel
- **Irwin Elman** is Ontario's Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth

This segment was produced by the Current's Liz Hoath

Award Ceremony at the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Vancouver



From left to right: Prof. Andrzej Wroblewski, Mrs. Irena Gostomska, Consul General of the Republic of Poland, Dr. Krzysztof Olendzki, Mr. Jerry Nussbaum

On October 9th, 2015, Ambassador Krzysztof Olendzki presented three Orders of Merit, awarded by the President of the Republic of Poland, Bronislaw Komorowski:

Prof. Andrzej Wroblewski was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

Mrs. Irena Gomstomska, the founder of the Vancouver Epizod Group, was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Jerry Nussbaum, the president of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

All three recipients are members of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

Our congratulations to all Recipients!

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada has established a scholarship. The following is the official description of the scholarship:

Janusz KORCZAK Association of Canada Graduate Scholarship in Children's Rights and Canadian Indigenous Education – A scholarship of \$1,000 is offered to an outstanding graduate student in the Faculty of Education whose research is focused on children's rights and/or Canadian Indigenous education in the field of Early Childhood Education. This award is to honour the legacy of Janusz Korczak's life and work. A Polish-Jewish pioneer of child advocacy, Korczak was one of the great humanitarians of the 20th century who devoted his life to establishing and defining the rights of the child. Korczak's ideas were adopted by the United Nations in the "Convention on the Rights of the Child" in 1959. This award is made upon the recommendation of the Faculty of Education in consultation with the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.



Lillian Boraks-Nemetz presents the Scholarship Certificate to Matthew Lee

The first scholarship has been awarded to Mr. Matthew Lee, a doctoral student at the Faculty of Education, in the 2014/2015 Winter Session. The scholarship certificate was presented to Mr. Matthew Lee by Lillian Boraks-Nemetz at the Opening Lecture of the "How to Love a Child" the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series on September 29, 2015.

The Janusz Korczak Association hosted Helma Browers, a fellow Korczakian from Holland at the Association's Annual General Meeting in July, at the home of Gina Dimant.

A journey through war, love

Friday 27th, March 2015 Written by **Tamara Szymańska**

The Jewish Independent

The first time I met Gina Dimant and her husband Sasha was in 2000 at the opening of my exhibition Evidence of Truth at the Sidney and Gertrude Zack Gallery. The exhibition was dedicated to all victims of Nazi concentration camps, which included my grandfather, who survived Auschwitz, only to be killed in the Flossenburg-Leitmeritz concentration camp. Years later, when I joined the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada, I met Gina again. She was the president of the association. I also met there Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo, the association's co-founder.

I felt quite honored when Gina asked me to write a review of Medvedeva-Nathoo's new book, *Crossroads: A True Story of Gina Dimant in War and Love* (K&O Harbor, 2014). Written originally in Russian, the English edition is translated by Richard J. Reisner and Medvedeva-Nathoo. It was launched on Jan. 11 of this year at the Zack Gallery.

Crossroads is truly an inspired and absorbing account. Born Hinda Wejgsman into a Jewish family in pre-Second World War Warsaw, Gina's carefree life fell apart when the Nazis invaded Poland. Almost overnight she lost her safe home and, with her parents and sister, had to leave behind extended family, never to see them again.

Crossroads follows the Wejgsmans family, their extraordinary journey in a cattle car from the eastern border of Nazi-occupied Poland to the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, and of their fight for survival there. The cold in the car was intolerable, and the Wejgsmans slept on straw, bodies side by side, trying to keep warm. They traveled for more than a month. They were sent to Leninogorsk in northeastern Kazakhstan, near the Altai Mountains, where temperatures dropped to minus 41 °C in winter.

After their arrival, Gina did not go to school because local authorities considered her an adult at 14 and gave her a construction job carrying bricks, four at a time. Gina reflects: "... my main memory from Leninogorsk is not what we ate there, but how terribly hungry we always were. With the feeling of hunger, you couldn't even fall asleep and, if you fell asleep, then it was with night dreams of food until you woke up with

the same daydreams.... In winter evenings when the frost was absolutely intolerable and it was inconceivable even to attempt lying in bed, so as not to freeze to death, we would pace the room in circles, single file."

The Wejgsman family survived six years in Leninogorsk. Medvedeva-Nathoo points out that it was exactly 72 months, slightly more than 2,000 days.

The postwar return of Gina and her family to Poland necessitated resettling, as Warsaw was in ruins. There was also some serenity, however. In her new town, in Szczecin, Gina's son from her first marriage, Saul Seweryn, was born. There, she also met her true love, Sasha, and became Gina Dimant.

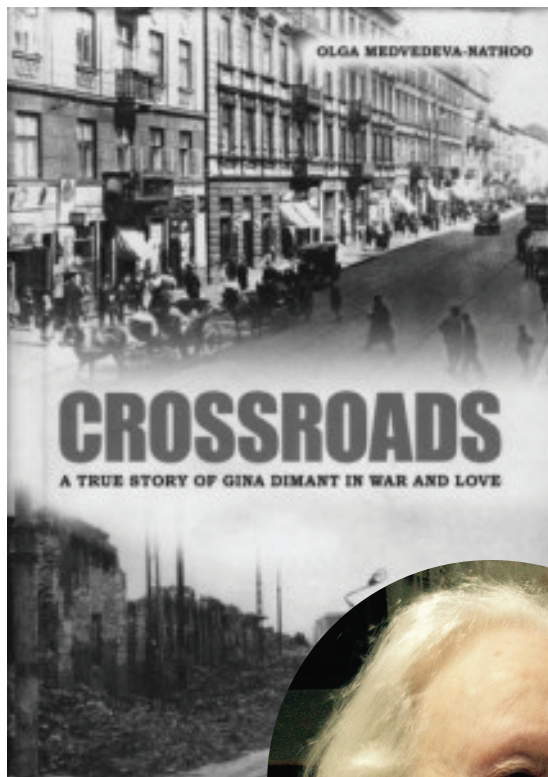
The Polish 1968 political crisis, known in Poland as the March Events, resulted in the suppression and repression of

Polish dissidents and the shameful antisemitic, "anti-Zionist" campaign waged by the Polish Politburo, followed by forced mass emigrations of Polish Jews. Gina remembers: "Poland rejected us unfairly and unjustly. A deep-seated pain lived in us for years.... We were ... convinced constantly: there are Poles and there are Poles. Those who were corrupt and added to corruption, and those who sympathized with us ... those who gloated over other's misfortunes and those who were outright angry at our departure."

Gina, with her husband and son, was displaced again. Looking for a place to settle, they chose Canada because it was a country far away from Europe that accepted new citizens. They arrived here in 1970. Despite their bitter farewell to Poland, their home here was always open to Poles, Jewish and non-Jewish: "A good human being – here was the only essential criterion taken into consideration."

In Vancouver, in 1999, Gina co-created the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada. In 2013, she was awarded the Gold Officer Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland for strengthening relations between Poles and Jews.

Medvedeva-Nathoo writes: "Tragic Polish-Jewish relations notwithstanding, Poles and Jews lived side by side through the centuries and, regardless of what isolationists like to



say, their history cannot be separated. The Dimants would always say: '... in the years of war, some Poles, obsessed with hatred, denounced Jews, while others risked their own lives to rescue them at a time when Poland was the only occupied country in which the death penalty was in force for anyone who hid the Jews or in some manner helped Jews.'" In the book, Gina reflects that there are many good and bad examples, pointing with triumph to Irena Sendler, a Pole who saved 2,500 Jewish children.

In *Crossroads*, Medvedeva-Nathoo has chosen to emphasize the battle of the individual and the will to survive set against the backdrop of three different cultures. It is a steadfast piece of writing that presents the stark facts of Gina's life, set chronologically, starting with the description of her childhood in prewar Warsaw, followed by their postwar experiences, concluding in 2013.

At times, Medvedeva-Nathoo's book is translated from Russian to English too literally, not taking into account the cultural context of the language into which she is translating. For example, when describing the usefulness of the newspaper Pravda in the USSR as toilet paper, the author translates it as a "nude-paper," which makes sense only in Polish or Russian. Readers would also benefit from a map illustrating Gina's journeys.

Crossroads is an historically accurate chronicle and a meticulously researched story that provokes discussion about the hardships and consequences of war, and the survival of one extraordinary family. It can be purchased from Gina Dimant at 604-733-6386.

Tamara Szymańska is a visual artist and a columnist for the Takie Życie, the Polish biweekly magazine for Western Canada. She lives in Vancouver with her husband and their dog.

Mrs. Gina Dimant is a board member of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo is a member of the Association and a board member 2002 – 2013.

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To register for the "How to Love a Child" the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series,

Please visit jklectures.educ.ubc.ca