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Happy 150th Canada! 1867-2017



*Jewish Canadian Involvement*



by Rochelle Burns, PhD ©

Before 'Philanthropic Foundations', there was *tzedakah*.

Jews, to wherever they emigrated, took with them the tradition of establishing a communal body, *kehillah*, to look after Jews in need.

The first Jewish social welfare body in Canada was the 1863 Montreal Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society. Across Canada, Jews developed a wide range of communal organizations - hospitals, social work agencies, homes for the aged, and libraries. Immigrant Jews also founded *landsmenschaften*, organizations of people coming from the same place in Europe, to help newcomers, and those in the Old Countries.

Then there is B'nai Brith Canada. Since 1875, it has fought against, not only anti-Semitism, but any discrimination, while championing human rights for all.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) wisely organized in 1919, while the Treaty of Versailles, ending World War 1, was being signed. The Treaty dealt with postwar minorities (not always helpfully), including those in Eastern Europe where many Jewish Canadians had relatives. As well, the CJC formed the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society to further help Jewish immigration to Canada.

Being a Jewish Canadian has meant following the Biblical dictum of helping others. It seems to be in our religious and cultural DNA!

So, by whatever named it's called, the Jewish Canadian heart and pocket book have always been linked for a hand up to other Jews, as well as all Canadians.

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Tzedakah box: Israel Orphans Home for Girls, Jerusalem, 1902: owned by writer