



COUNTLESS JOURNEYS. ONE CANADA.



HENRY BIRKS & SONS
LIMITED
PHILLIPS SQUARE
MONTREAL

✓ Immigration Policy - German
✓ Immigration Policy - Jewish
210459

Sixteenth
June
1938

Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King,
Prime Minister,
Ottawa.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister, -

Pardon my writing you personally.

I wish your permission to bring into the
Dominion from Mainz, Germany, a young lad, Franz Cahn,
17 years of age last February.

Letter from W.M. Birks to William Lyon Mackenzie King, June 1938. Library and Archives Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds, e011196620 © Estate of William Massey Birks

ONE ENTREPRENEUR'S EFFORTS TO SAVE A FAMILY

In the 1930s, like many nations, Canada turned away large numbers of Jews seeking refuge. The efforts of Montreal entrepreneur William Birks, son of Henry Birks, founder of the Birks jewelry firm, **defied the prevailing sentiments of his day**; on the brink of global war and the Holocaust, he tried to get a young Jewish boy and his family admitted into Canada.

Refuge Canada Tent, the Museum's small travelling exhibition, sheds light on Canada's varied responses

to refugee movements and on the experiences and contributions of refugees. We have recently added a poignant 1938 letter from Birks to Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King to the exhibit. The letter beseeches King to reconsider decisions that, at the time, denied refuge to many.

I wish your permission to bring into the Dominion from Mainz, Germany, a young lad, Franz Cahn, 17 years of age last February. He is well schooled,

Continued from first page

speaks and writes English fluently and comes from a cultured and professional family ... He is denied a University course in Germany because of Jewish blood. He will not become a factor in the labour market, nor replace a Canadian. I will be responsible for the lad in every way and give any personal bond.

William Birks, Montreal, June 16, 1938

King's response provided no reassurance:

You will, I am sure, be aware of the difficulties involved in a matter of this kind, particularly at the present time, when conditions in Europe have increased manifold the numbers of those seeking permits for entry into Canada, and when economic and other conditions in the Dominion itself make it more than ever necessary that particular care and scrutiny be observed in the granting of applications.

Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, Ottawa, June 20, 1938

Despite the Prime Minister's dismissive reply, Birks persisted, and just before the Holocaust began, Franz Cahn and his parents were admitted to Canada. Birks' efforts are an example of how Canadians can and have led with compassion to sponsor refugees in more recent times. Stories like Birks' offer ideas on how **empathy and action can shape the future** and bring us together.

- Sara England, Assistant Curator

MARIE'S MESSAGE



The Museum's Holiday card this year featured a quote from Dr. Lalita Malhotra. Dr. Malhotra was born in New Delhi, studied medicine in England and later, settled in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where she became an advocate for women's and immigrant health in her northern community and in India. The quote, which is about settling in Prince Albert, reads:

We had a Jewish family kitty-corner to us and a Christian family next door. They made it so nice that we were able to celebrate everything. Christmas

with the Christian family, Chanukah with the Jewish family and Diwali at my place.

At a time when world events are dividing people, this issue of *Passages* focuses on **the things that bring us together**. You'll read about a book launch event with the fabulous Salah Bachir that brought together so many of the diverse communities he's touched, the programs we're planning to stave off the winter blues and an Indigenous artistic intervention in the Museum about hope and healing. You'll learn how, from our home in Halifax, we are reaching and teaching students across Canada and about how a prominent entrepreneur's persistent efforts saved a Jewish family on the eve of the Second World War.

The Museum's work is always important, but it feels especially important now. *Passages* is a publication for past and potential donors. If you have given in the past, thank you. If you are thinking of giving now, know that you are contributing to a crucial mission: To help us collect and share stories that remind us of our shared humanity.

Marie Chapman

Marie Chapman,
Chief Executive Officer



Dr. Gina Cody was the first woman to earn a PhD in building engineering in Canada and had a hugely successful career as an engineer and business leader. In 2018, the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science at Concordia University became the first engineering and computer science faculty in the world named after a woman.

THE ONLY LIMIT WAS THE SIZE OF MY DREAMS

The following is excerpted from Dr. Gina Cody's speech at the Museum's *Fascinating Canadian* fundraising luncheon in Toronto, November 16, 2023, an event co-chaired by Annette Verschuren and Calin Rovinescu. *Fascinating Canadian* events are held each year in Halifax and Toronto.

It's my pleasure to help raise awareness and appreciation of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. It seems fitting that we are gathered here in Toronto. About *half of our residents* were born outside Canada, which ranks Toronto among the world's most multicultural cities.

The first European settlement of Toronto goes back to the 1700s. Since then, waves of newcomers from every continent have built this city up into what it is today. I am one of those immigrants.

In 1979 I flew into Montreal, Quebec, to pursue a graduate degree as an international student.

I was born in Iran. 1979 was a year of unprecedented upheaval in my home country. The Shah fled Iran in January of that year, and by April, the revolution had made Iran an Islamic Republic.

I was just one human entering a new country, Canada.

I came because my brother was here. He told me Canada was a great country, where my future would only be limited by the size of my dreams. And **I dream big.**

When I see people – humans – arriving in Canada today from places like Ukraine, South America or Africa, I think of two things. First, my heart goes out to them because I know what it's like to be propelled by fear into the unknown. Second, I wonder what their *story* will be.

Canada will change them, just as Canada changed me. But how will they change Canada? They will work, they will fall in love, they will raise families, they will be neighbours and customers and employees and bosses. And citizens. They will live full lives as Canadians – as long as our immigration system and economy allow them to flourish.



Tracey-Mae Chambers' installation will be in the Museum's *Canadian Immigration Story* exhibition until December 2025.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF HOPE AND HEALING

How does an immigration museum in a country like Canada reflect the experience and views of Indigenous people- the only people on this land who are not immigrants or relative newcomers?

The Museum has a number of strategies including collaborations with Indigenous consultants, scholars and knowledge holders. One of the projects we have initiated is to invite an Indigenous artist every other year to create an **artistic intervention in our Canadian Immigration Story exhibition**.

The program launches with an original piece from installation artist and member of the Métis Nation of Ontario, Tracey-Mae Chambers' *#hopeandhealingcanada* project. Since July 2021 Tracey-Mae has created over 100 installations at residential school historical sites, museums, art galleries and other public spaces.

Tracey-Mae writes:

Many of these spaces present a colonial viewpoint and primarily speak about the settlers who arrived and lived here, but not the Indigenous people that were displaced along the way. The installations are constructed with red wool, silk, cotton yarn.

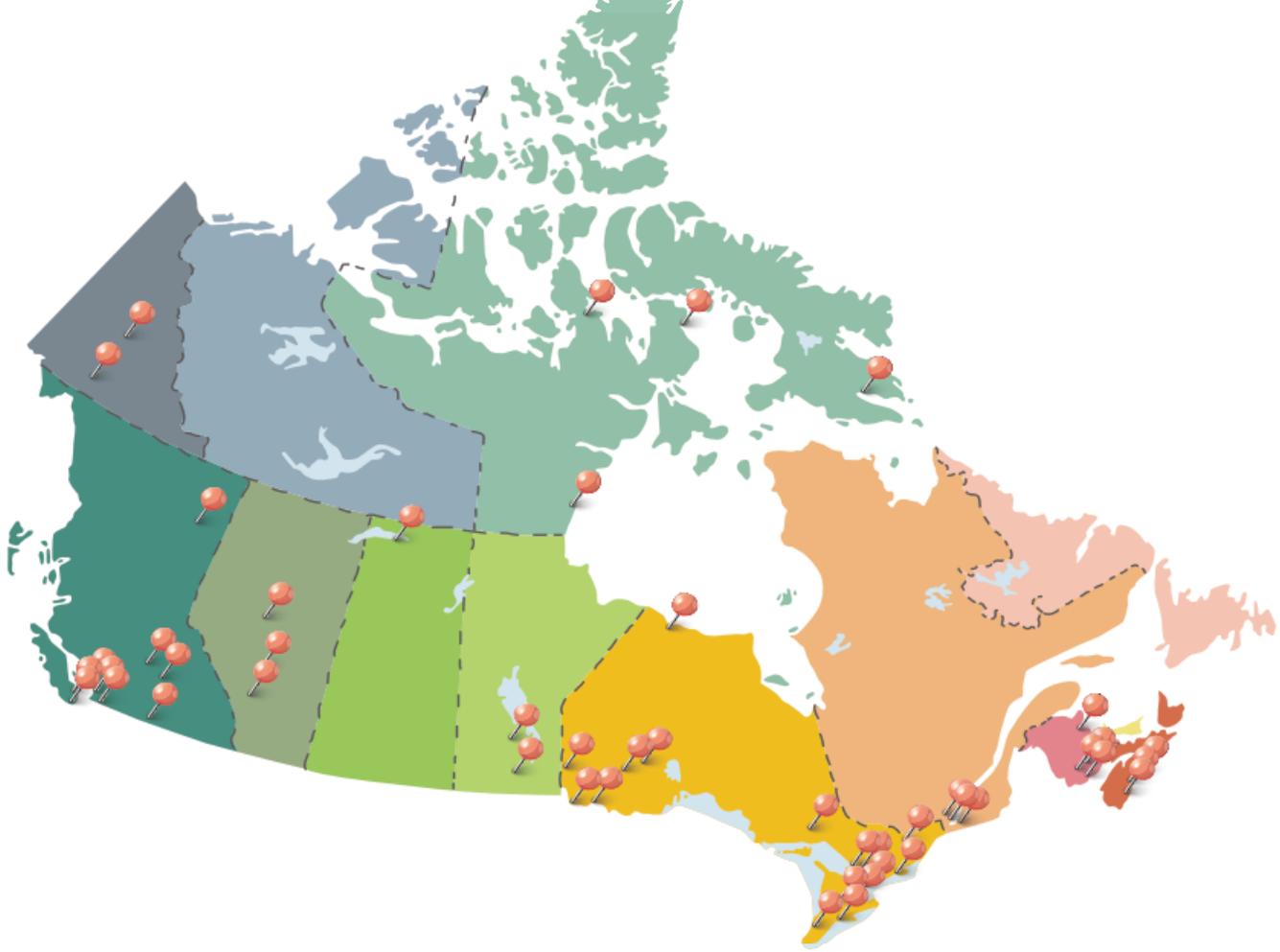
Red is the colour of blood. Red is the slur against Indigenous people. Red is the colour of passion and anger, danger and power, courage and love.

I hope to bridge the gap between settlers and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit by creating art that is approachable and non-confrontational and by starting a conversation about decolonization and reconciliation.

Her new installation at the Museum will be extra special because each crocheted 'seed' was created from yarn used in communities across Canada in the larger *#hopeandhealingcanada* project. The artist explains, "These 'seeds' represent humans who have travelled across the globe and settled in these places."

The installation will be on display in the *Canadian Immigration Story* exhibition at the Museum until December 2025.

- Carrie-Ann Smith. Vice-President, Audience Engagement.



Virtual Field Trips expand the impact of the Museum's educational programs to all parts of Canada

HOW THE MUSEUM REACHES STUDENTS ACROSS CANADA

If you watched a lot of *The Simpsons* like I did growing up, you might remember the episode in which Lisa tells Homer that the Chinese use the same word for crisis and opportunity. "Yes, CRISITUNITY!" Homer exclaims! "Crisitunity" was the unofficial slogan for the department of Interpretation and Visitor Experience during Covid times.

Before Covid, I had always thought of my team as managing people's experiences *once they got here*. During lockdown, we had to go to them.

We started delivering Virtual Field Trips in November of 2020. Since then, we have delivered the programming to 183 groups (3,977 individuals) from the Yukon, Nunavut, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The team created original programs based on topics we had not previously explored; Asian exclusion, the economic factors of Immigration, the legacy of volunteerism at Pier 21 and the experiences of children immigrating to Canada.

Since then, we have added a few more topics to our "menu" of educational programming. *Immigration Simulation* is our most popular in-person educational program and we made it into a Virtual Field Trip.

Now, we can simulate the immigration process from the early 1900s and pretend to be immigration officers with students in Iqaluit. We adapted our in-person program for small children called *Teddy Bear's Journey*, so **we can now play stuffed animals with 5-year-olds in Kamloops**. And we created a program specifically looking at Jewish immigration to Canada, so we can solemnly remember past mistakes with members of a synagogue in Montreal.

Through this experience, I was reminded that the things that pull us apart can also be the things that bring us together. While I would rather not have to deal with any more crises, I look forward to leveraging many more opportunities to come.

- Kristine Kovacevic Manager, *Interpretation and Visitor Experience*

Virtual Field Trips Education Program supported by the Beatrice Crawford Family. The Museum's Education Program is supported by the J & W Murphy Foundation.



Kavyashree Nagaraj (third from left) taught classical Indian dance as part of the Museum's *Celebrate Winter!* activities.

WINTER PROGRAMS BRING LIGHT TO THE DARKNESS

The short, dark days of winter are a perfect time for people to come together at the Museum. Firstly, the Museum isn't as crowded as in the summer and fall. But more importantly, getting out with other people helps ward off the loneliness so common at this time of year. Here are two new initiatives designed to bring people together.

On December 21st, we debuted the *Celebrate!* series, with *Celebrate Winter!*, a cross-cultural, family-focused event featuring winter holidays and celebrations spanning the globe. *Celebrate Winter!* touched on customs, traditions, and foods related to Diwali, Chanukah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Shogatsu (Japan), and Hogmanay (Scotland). These holidays all have distinct meanings and traditions, but many elements are common across all celebrations, including the importance of lights, hearty foods, games, music, and, of course, spending time with friends and family. *Celebrate!* continues as a quarterly series, with the next instalment, *Celebrate Spring!*, expected in March.

The second is a program that will have already begun by the time this article goes to print. Here's what's planned: In January, thanks to a generous gift from

Fred and Elizabeth Fountain, we host *pARTicipate*. On what are typically the three dreariest Sunday afternoons of the year, we will fill the Museum with creativity, colour and joy! Visitors can sketch George's Island from inside the Gateway's massive windows, learn a few steps of a favourite new dance style, or bring an instrument of choice to the Museum to take part in a musical menagerie. **January 14th is all about visual arts, January 21st focuses on dance and movement, and the 28th is music-centric** and culminates in a jam session! While all are welcome, the program is specifically designed to help newcomers engage with artistic practices they may be unfamiliar with and connect to the broader community.

This winter, the Museum is a place to learn new things, reconnect with yourself and friends, and share a moment of joy and laughter with those you love. Keep checking our events page for other winter programming that brings people together!

- Rebecca MacKenzie-Hopkins, *Public Programs and Community Engagement Manager*



Museum CEO Marie Chapman interviews Salah Bachir.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BELONG

Salah Bachir has many titles: Accomplished entrepreneur. Successful executive. Celebrated publisher and producer. Philanthropist, patron of the arts, gay activist, and benefactor of dialysis care. But beneath all the achievements, awards, and jewels, is simply a human with a very BIG heart and an uncanny ability to bring people together and make them feel both vulnerable and safe.

Salah chose the Museum as the location to launch his memoir, *First to Leave the Party*. As luck would have it, the day of the event was 58 years to the day that Salah first stepped foot on Canadian soil from Lebanon.

It was wonderful to hear Salah's stories about his childhood, of his mother's cooking, of being a young person in Toronto's Rexdale neighbourhood, and of meeting celebrities like Marlon Brando and Elizabeth Taylor.

But because Salah's interests and contributions are so many and so varied, it was also a wonderful opportunity to bring people together. The room was filled with members of the Halifax Lebanese community, people from immigrant services, health care and arts workers, and members of equity-seeking groups including Phoenix Youth, PFLAG, Rainbow Refugee and the

Halifax Refugee Clinic. It was like all the worlds that Salah has touched came together to celebrate our shared humanity.

And most importantly, **it felt like we all belonged.**

I've worked here at the Museum for a long time, as have many of us. It would be a hard place to leave but I've struggled to put a finger on why. I realized at Salah's event that it is that sense of belonging. It is a sense I feel and one that I believe the Museum creates in its many visitors.

To learn more about Salah and others who have contributed so meaningfully to our country, I encourage you to tour through *Canadian Immigration Hall*. You can also find limited edition signed copies of Salah's book for sale in our gift shop.

- Fiona Valverde, *Vice-President, Revenue Generation*

SPOTLIGHT YOUR CULTURAL GROUP IN THE MUSEUM

Plaques on the *Wadih M. Fares Wall of Tribute* recognize the contributions of community and cultural groups as well as embassies and consuls, and celebrate their relationship to the Museum.

There are **currently over 50 plaques** recognizing groups from more than **30 countries of origin**.

Plaques are available at a **Silver level \$2,500** or a **Platinum level \$10,000**. We will be pleased to work with you to plan an unveiling ceremony for your group.

To have your group represented, contact:

Maria Almeida,
Donor Relations Manager
malmeida@pier21.ca
902-420-6656



Canadian Order of AHEPA (COA)

When one tells their story
It all begins in Greece.
From sorrow, a spark of courage
A grueling ocean voyage.
They found their livelihood,
In this far off land.
Journey of faith & love of family.
Greeks carried the spirit of hope
Forming part of the Canadian
multicultural mosaic.

Εξιστορώντας τα βιώματά τους,
όλα ξεκινάνε στην Ελλάδα.
Από τη θλίψη, μια σπίθα κουράγιου.
Ένα εξαντλητικό θαλασσινό ταξίδι.
Ξεκίνησαν τη νέα τους Ζωή
σ' αυτήν τη μακρινή χώρα.
Ταξίδι πίστης και αγάπης για την οικογένεια.
Οι Έλληνες έφεραν μαζί τους το πνεύμα της ελπίδας,
που πλέον αποτελεί μέρος του Καναδικού
πολυπολιτισμικού μωσαϊκού.

On June 15, 2023, The Canadian Order of AHEPA (American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association) unveiled this plaque on the *Wadih M. Fares Wall of Tribute*.

The plaque, donated in support of the Museum, commemorates the contributions of Greek immigrants to Canada.