

CALGARY JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL CELEBRATES THE LITTLE SYNAGOGUE ON THE PRAIRIE PROJECT



After four years of work by a dedicated group of volunteers, the Little Synagogue on the Prairie, also known as the Montefiore Institute, finally settled into its new home at Heritage Park this summer – and proved to be one of the most visited buildings at the park.

The grand opening of The Little Synagogue, which was held on Sunday, June 28, 2009, was a major event in Calgary's history. Close to 2,000 people attended the celebration. Among the dignitaries were the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Honourable Norman Kwong, and Mrs. Kwong, Member of Parliament Lee Richardson, Attorney General and Minister of Justice Alison Redford, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit Lindsay Blackett, Mayor Dave Bronconnier, MLAs Wayne Cao, Harry Chase, Dave Rodney, Aldermen Joe Ceci, Andre Chabot, Diane Colley-Urquhart, Joe Connelly, Linda Fox-Mellway, Bob Hawkesworth, Ray Jones, Gord Lowe, John Mar, Ric McIvor, Brian Pincott and Jim Stevenson. At the grand opening, dignitaries spoke, children and seniors sang, visitors ate, danced, and enjoyed their first glimpse of the restored Montefiore Institute.

The celebration capped off the Little Synagogue on the Prairie Project, a unique 4-year grassroots effort that started off with a small group of volunteers who were determined to see a synagogue at Heritage Park. The project captured the interest and imagination of many Calgarians and people from all backgrounds and skills soon became involved. Some raised the funds, some worked on the restoration. Some built furniture, some sewed pieces to adorn the little synagogue. Some made watercolor paintings and miniature metal art. Children created art and songs inspired by the project.

Yasher Koach to Irena Karshenbaum and the board and volunteers of The Little Synagogue on the Prairie Society for their success and congratulations to Heritage Park on being the first historic park to include a synagogue.



The Little Synagogue on the Prairie Project Society board and dignitaries.

Top row (l-r): Mrs. Blackett, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit Lindsay Blackett and their children; Minister of Justice and Attorney General Alison Redford; President and CEO of Heritage Park Alida Visbach; Calgary Centre Member of Parliament Lee Richardson; (hidden) Chairman of Heritage Park Wayne Chodzicki; Stephen Singer; member of Little Synagogue Fundraising Committee Sam Switzer (holding the Torah); Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Honourable Norman Kwong; Mayor Dave Bronconnier; Mrs. Kwong; President of the Little Synagogue Society Irena Karshenbaum; President of CJCC Gerry Barron; Rabbi Menachem Matusof; Dov Chetner and son-in-law Yossi Suissa. **Front row** (l-r): The Little Synagogue on the Prairie Project Society board members: Jack Switzer; Treasurer Shauna Switzer; Bobby Libin; Dr. Ralph Gurevitch; Vice President and Heritage Advisor Trudy Cowan; Daryl Fridhandler; Emanuel Cohen; Leslie Levant; Shel Bercovich; Betti Weiss



Cutting the ribbon.

Holding the ribbon on the left: Irena Karshenbaum (President of the Little Synagogue Society) and Alida Visbach (President and CEO of Heritage Park) on the right. Cutting the ribbon Mrs. Kwong and Honourable Norman Kwong, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. **Background** (l-r): Mayor Dave Bronconnier, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit Lindsay Blackett, Minister of Justice and Attorney General Alison Redford.



Torah procession.

Avi Amir, whose firm, Homes by Avi, built the foundation for the Montefiore Institute, carries the Torah.



Sam Switzer places the Torah in the Aron Kodesh.

L-r: Minister of Culture and Community Spirit Lindsay Blackett; Mayor Dave Bronconnier; Attorney General and Minister of Justice Alison Redford; Calgary Centre Member of Parliament Lee Richardson; The Little Synagogue on the Prairie Project Society President Irena Karshenbaum; Mrs. Kwong; Honourable Norman Kwong Lieutenant Governor of Alberta; Sam Switzer; Little Synagogue Vice President and Heritage Advisor Trudy Cowan.



Descendants of the original settlers on the porch of the Montefiore Institute.

Many of the original settlers moved to Los Angeles, where they frequently met as "The Montefiore Society." Here, their descendants present the society's gavel to Trudy Cowan.