

MONTREAL GAZETTE

Montreal girl's bat mitzvah project is bearing witness to the Holocaust

Susan Schwartz, Montreal Gazette 2 days ago



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They are in their 80s and their 90s, the Holocaust survivors interviewed by 13-year-old Montrealer Eliane Goldstein for a new podcast. They are still able to recount their stories clearly and can still bear witness. But a time will come, sooner rather than later, when they no longer can.



© Provided by The Gazette Eliane Goldstein interviews Holocaust survivor Johnny Jablon in a park in Côte-St-Luc for a podcast she is doing for her bat mitzvah project.

And that is part of her concern.

"If people don't start learning about it, the Holocaust will be forgotten," said the Westmount High School student who created the podcast, *The Effect on Us*, as a bat mitzvah project. A bat mitzvah is a Jewish coming of age ritual for a girl, as the bar mitzvah is for a 13-year-old boy. Eliane's bat mitzvah is Saturday.

Between 1941 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered 6 million Jews across German-occupied Europe for no reason other than they were Jews.

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According to a poll of 1,100 Canadians commissioned ahead of International Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2019, about half of those surveyed could not name one Nazi concentration camp, most did not realize that 6 million people had died, and among millennials, nearly one-quarter weren't sure they'd heard of the Holocaust.

As part of a program at Congregation Dorshei Emet, where Eliane's bat mitzvah is taking place, participants preparing to become b'nai mitzvah — have their bat mitzvah or bar mitzvah — were expected to do a project related to Judaism that will benefit the community, explained Eliane's mother, Liat Goldstein.

When the synagogue's spiritual leader, Rabbi Boris Dolin, suggested a podcast, Eliane liked the idea. Her goal with the 19 episodes of this first season of the podcast is to show the effect of the Holocaust on survivors and subsequent generations — hence the name — “and not to let history repeat itself,” she said.

To recruit survivors, her mother posted flyers around Côte-St-Luc, which has a significant Jewish community, and notices on Facebook community pages. Although most of Eliane's interviews were with survivors who live in Montreal, Zoom made it possible to do interviews with subjects as far afield as Israel



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