Immigration Timeline of Jewish Montreal
Credits:
Canadian Jewish Heritage Network
Written by Shannon Hodge, Archivist
Jewish Public Library Archives of Montreal

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Immigration Timeline of Jewish Montreal
Teacher Guide

Concepts and Competencies Covered:

- **Information and Media Literacy Concept(s):** Synthesizes and organizes information in a manner that they can understand and communicate again; makes connections with new information to their own knowledge base

- **Historical Inquiry Concept(s):** Take historical perspective; identify change and continuity; analyse cause and consequence.

- **Core Competencies:** Examines social phenomena from a historical perspective; constructs his/her consciousness of citizenship through the study of history.

**Grades:** 5 to 8

**Introduction:** This activity was designed to introduce students to the immigration history of Jewish Montreal and also to encourage them to be active learners in charting that history. This activity should also encourage students to explore their own family’s immigration story.

**Time Required:** 60 minutes

**Prior Knowledge and Discussion Required:**

- 1 full class discussing the immigration timeline of Jewish Quebec or of the students’ community.
- Once the timeline is constructed, students must also discuss ideas of the circumstances surrounding immigration:
  - Why do people immigrate? Identify push and pull factors.
  - What was life like for people once they immigrated? In the past? Now? Is it different?
  - Do you know why your family immigrated here?
Instructions – Class #1, Discussion

Timeline

1. Prepare your students for examining the Jewish Montreal Immigration Timeline by first defining or reviewing together associated terms and events such as:
   - Immigration
   - Refugees
   - Displaced persons
   - DP Camps (Displaced Person camps)
   - Pogrom
   - World War I and World War II
   - Cholera
   - Tuberculosis
   - Sponsorship
   - JIAS (Jewish Immigrant Aid Services)

2. Split students into reading groups to take turns reading through the Immigration Timeline book that follows this page. Be sure to tell students that they will be answering questions about the timeline together as a class.

3. When reading is finished go through the Immigration Timeline Chart as a class, either on flip charts, smart boards or chalk boards. Encourage students to check through their paper copies to contribute answers to the questions of the Timeline Chart.

4. Upon completion of the class give your students the homework assignment of interviewing their parents, grandparents, guardian or other family members to find out why, when, and how their families came to Montreal and/or Canada. A sample interview sheet for students to use is included in this kit.

5. Follow up on this class by completing either the Picture Postcards from the Past activity or the activity of creating a profile of an immigrant to Jewish Montreal from various time periods. Alternatively, the class can create their own postcards using old family photographs that were first copied so as to protect the originals.
Immigration Timeline of Jewish Montreal
1760-1839

Who Made up the Community?
- The first Jewish families to settle in Quebec after the fall of New France came as traders, merchants and with the British military.
- The first families were the Harts, Solomons, Jacobs, Judahs, Josephs, Davids, Hays, Franks and Levys. They were mainly of Spanish and German descent but came to Quebec by way of England.
- The first of these families who then settled in Montreal did so as a group below St. Antoine street. They became active in the economic and social boom of Montreal in the late 18th century.

Historical Notes
- 1760, Fall of New France. Jews, once barred from the Catholic colony of New France are now allowed to settle by the British.
- 1760, Aaron Hart becomes the first Jew to establish residency in Quebec at Trois-Rivières at the Bécancour seigneury.
- 1777, founding of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (Shearith Israel), first located on St. James Street (now where the big Palais de Justice is in Old Montreal).
- 1807, Ezekiel Hart (son of Aaron Hart) is elected for the first time to the legislature but is denied his seat because he is Jewish.
- 1831, the Bill of Equal Rights is made law in Quebec. It granted the right to run and participate in politics, 24 years after Ezekiel Hart first tried to take his rightful seat in the legislature.
- 1832, the government of Lower Canada (Quebec) passed a law ensuring religious freedom for the Jews of Quebec.
1840-1880

Who Made up the Community?
- Population of Jewish Montreal in 1841 is 154 people.
- Population of Jewish Montreal by 1861 is 1350 people.

Historical Notes
- 1846, Establishment of the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue; in 1886 the congregation built their synagogue on McGill College Avenue.
- 1863, Founding of the Young Men’s Hebrew Benevolent Society, a group that functioned like the current community organizations available, such as the YM-YWHA and Ometz.
- 1867, the British North America Act establishes the Dominion of Canada!
1881-1914
Who Made up the Community?

- Between 1899-1901, nearly 3,000 Jewish immigrants come to Montreal, mainly from Romania and Russia. They are escaping poverty, pogroms and persecution.
- By 1901, the population of Jewish Montreal reaches 16,716.
- The newly-arrived immigrants continue to settle around St. Lawrence Boulevard and due to their large numbers and success in Montreal, there is a rapid increase in Jewish schools, synagogues, charities, stores, delis, tailors, newspapers, social groups, clubs and other organizations.
- The **Uptowners** was the nickname given to the first wave of Jewish immigrants who were very well settled in Montreal and successful in business and Montreal society. They moved from their original place on St. Antoine Street to bigger, fancier houses up on Sherbrooke Street and into Westmount. The Uptowners were already assimilated in-between Montreal’s English and French populations and participated fully in the social, political, and sporting world of the city.
- The **Downtowners** was the nickname given to the newly arriving, very poor Russian Jewish immigrants who settled along St. Lawrence Boulevard. Many of these immigrants were fleeing prosecution and brought with them a different language (Yiddish) as well as new political ideas. They would contribute to the changing face of Quebec politics and establish a Yiddish cultural world in Montreal.

Historical Notes

- 1846, Jewish Immigrant Society is founded in part to assist Jewish refugees escaping Russian pogroms.
- 1882, First reform congregation is founded, Temple Emanu-El.
- 1896, first Talmud Torah school is founded.
- 1897, *Canadian Jewish Times*, the first Jewish newspaper printed in Canada is founded.
- 1907, the *Keneder Adler*, Montreal's Yiddish daily newspaper is founded.
- 1909, Founding of the Montreal Hebrew Orphan’s home
- 1909, Founding of the Young Men’s Hebrew Association (YMHA)
- 1912, Abraham Blumenthal is elected the first Jewish alderman in Canada!
- 1913, founding of the Jewish Peretz School.
- 1914, founding of the Jewish Public Library.
- 1914, Founding of the Jewish People’s School.
- 1914, Founding of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, the *Keneder Adler’s* English sister newspaper.
1881-1914

Jewish Peretz School, in front of the Baron de Hirsch Institute building, ca1913.

Reading room of the Jewish Public Library at 4099 Esplanade, ca1947.

Print shop of the Keneder Adler, ca193-.
1914-1945

Who Made up the Community?

- In the “inter-war” period (1918-1939), restrictions on Jewish immigration were very strict due to the onslaught of high poverty and need during the Great Depression as well as anti-Semitism.

- “The Main” or St. Laurent Boulevard is the hub of Yiddish Jewish Montreal, store signs are often in Yiddish and the Jewish population spreads itself out from The Main into an area made up of five main streets: St. Urbain, Clark, Waverly, Esplanade and Jeanne Mance.

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**Historical Notes**

- World War I lasts from 1914-1918.
- During World War I and World War II, Canadian Jewish soldiers make up the largest ethnic minority group in Canada’s armed forces.
- 4,700 Canadian Jews enlisted to fight in World War I and over 17,000 during World War II.
- 1917, Founding of Federation of Jewish Philanthropies (today’s FEDERATION CJA)
- 1919, Founding of Canadian Jewish Congress
- 1920, Founding of Jewish Immigrant Aid Society
- 1920, Founding of Camp B’nai Brith
- 1921, the Canadian Jewish War Orphan Committee travels to Ukraine and rescues 150 orphans, placing them in homes across Canada.
- Great Depression begins in 1929. Between 1929 and 1933, over 30% of Canada’s workforce is unemployed and dependent on government or philanthropic relief.
- 1929, Jewish population of Montreal reaches 60, 087, 94% claim that Yiddish is their mother tongue.
- 1934, Jewish General Hospital is officially opened.
- World War II lasts from 1939-1945.
Immigration Timeline of Jewish Montreal

Group portrait of Jewish Reinforcement Draft Co. recruits, Windsor, Nova Scotia, June 1918.

Harry Hershman of the Canadian Jewish War Orphan Committee standing with six orphans, July 8, 1921.

Baseball game at Camp B’nai Brith, ca192-.

Map of Canada in Yiddish, 1923.
Post-1945

Who Made up the Community?

- Between 1947-1952, Canada admits 11,064 Jewish refugees into the country, 40% of these Jews settle in Montreal, giving Montreal the third-highest population of Holocaust survivors.
- Also in 1947, 1,100 Jewish orphans arrive in Montreal under the War Orphans programme, started by the Canadian Jewish Congress.
- During the 1950s, Hassidic survivors of the Holocaust also start to immigrate and establish communities within Jewish Montreal.

Historical Notes

- 1947, Maurice Silicoff and Bernard Shane of the Montreal Jewish Labour Committee are named colonels in the Canadian army so they can travel to Europe and bring back Jewish refugees skilled in trades like tailoring.
- 1947, the United Nations vote to partition Palestine
- 1948, Israeli War of Independence
- 1952, Jewish population of Montreal reaches 85,000
- 1965, after extensive lobbying by the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Protestant School Board of Montreal finally allows Jews on its school boards.

Identity papers for Hirsch Dranger, listing all concentration camps he was imprisoned in during the war.
1956-today
Who Made up the Community?

- 1956, more than 4500 Jews flee Hungary after the failed Revolution, 1500 settle in Montreal.
- 1957-1966, over 3,000 Moroccan Jews begin to immigrate to Canada, mainly to Montreal.
- In the same period, Jews from Middle Eastern countries like Iran start to arrive in Montreal.
- 1979, first Ethiopian Jews arrive in Montreal.
- Montreal’s Jewish community moves west into Hampstead, Snowdon and Cote St-Luc. The newly arrived Sephardic immigrants settle in Ville St-Laurent, Chomedey-Laval and Dollard-des-Ormeaux.
- Beginning in the early 1990s, Russian Jews from the former Soviet Union begin to immigrate to Montreal in large numbers.

Historical Notes

- The new Moroccan Jewish community in Montreal establishes the first francophone synagogue, Congregation Mogen David.
- 1960, Canadian Bill of Rights is passed in Parliament.
- 1962, the Canadian government introduces new rules for immigration so that people cannot be discriminated against based on colour, race or creed.
- 1967, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts opens.
- 1972, Cummings House opens on Cote Ste-Catherine Road, today it houses Jewish organizations such as the Jewish Public Library, Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, Jewish Family Services, Camp B’nai Brith and Combined Jewish Appeal.
- 1973, March to Jerusalem begins as an annual event.
- 1980, first sovereignty referendum in Quebec
- 1994, Sylviane Borenstein is called to the Quebec Superior Court, the Jewish woman to do so.

Interior, Dorval Airport, crowd of people greeting immigrants arriving in Montreal from Morocco, July 10, 1968.
Class Activity – Charting the Immigration Timeline of Jewish Montreal

*For class discussion presented on board, screen or flip charts. For each time period, go through each question to create an even greater picture of immigrant life in Jewish Montreal.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>1760-1839</th>
<th>1840-1881</th>
<th>1881-1914</th>
<th>1914-1945</th>
<th>Post-1945</th>
<th>1956-today</th>
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<td>Countries of Origin of Immigrants</td>
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<td>Reasons for Coming to Montreal</td>
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<td>Community Organizations Available</td>
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<td>Are These Community Organizations Still Available?*</td>
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*Or community organizations that deliver similar services.*
Interview Sheet – Family Immigration Story

Student Name:

Person(s) Interviewed:

When did our family first arrive in Montreal?

Why did they come to Montreal? Did they go anywhere else first?

How did they arrive here?

Did another person or organization help them immigrate here?

Do you know what life was like for the first person in our family to come here? Was life different from how we live now?

Do we have any photographs or documents that record our family’s immigration story? What? If not, is there a reason why we don’t have any photographs or documents? Examples: passports, photographs, correspondence, identity papers, etc.
Profile of an Immigrant to Jewish Montreal

Time Period:

Country where I was born:

Why did I come to Canada?

Was life easy for me when I first came here?

Where might I have lived when I arrived in Montreal?

What sort of job might have had when I arrived in Montreal?

What was the Jewish community like when I arrived?

How has it different from the community today? What things are the same?