

Press release

For immediate release

Ometz celebrates 150 years of service to the Montreal Jewish community

Launches anniversary website www.ometz150.ca

Montreal, June 21, 2013 – Ometz is proud to announce the celebration of its 150th anniversary, marking 150 years of continuous service to the Jewish community of Montreal. The official event highlighting this milestone took place on Thursday, June 20th at the Gelber Centre, during the agency's Annual General Meeting. A private cocktail to honor the Past Leadership of Ometz preceded the celebratory event.

To mark its 150th anniversary, Ometz launched the website www.ometz150.ca to showcase the evolution of delivering services to the Montreal community through a timeline and a virtual tour, and to encourage those who have been touched by Ometz to share their stories about how their lives were impacted by the organisation.

"Continuity, collective memory and the upholding of tradition are important values to the Jewish people," said Ometz President, Howard Lohner. "We can't think of a better way to commemorate our 150th anniversary than by collecting the stories of those individuals who have contributed to our past, present and future. Given the possibilities of current technology, we want to reach out via our anniversary website to anyone who ever was, or is currently involved with us – as a client, a staff member, a Board member, a volunteer, or a donor - to share your stories with us online."

www.ometz150.ca was created in partnership with the Interactive Museum of Jewish Montreal (IMJM) and with Summit Tech.

A bit of history

One summer night in July 1863 - four years before Canada was founded – 30 Jewish men gathered in a room over a store on Great St. James Street in Montreal and established the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, an organization dedicated to the social welfare of the Jewish community. Their action took incredible foresight, considering that at the time there were fewer than 1000 Jews in Montreal and that the community was not experiencing any unusual economic hardship. Little did they realize the key role their organization would play in shaping the Jewish community in the years to follow.

A continuing tide of immigration meant that by 1890, barely 25 years later, the demand for services had exceeded the capacity of the small community. The Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society sought help from world Jewry's greatest philanthropist of the nineteenth century – the Austrian railway magnate, Baron Maurice de Hirsch. To acknowledge the Baron's gift of \$20,000, the Society renamed itself the Baron de Hirsch Institute.

The actions of those young men that July night laid the blueprint for the subsequent community organisations Jewish Employment Montreal (JEM), Jewish Family Services (JFS) and Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS), which in 2008 were merged into Ometz.

About Ometz

Founded in 1863, Ometz celebrates 150 years of providing social services to the Montreal Jewish community, from generation to generation. Ometz is a not-for-profit human services agency which supports and strengthens individuals and families by offering a range of employment, immigration, school and social services. Serving more than 13,000 people annually, Ometz provides intervention, prevention, and support services and programs aimed to enhance quality of life at any stage of the lifecycle. Whether supporting a student who is struggling at school, a family in crisis, an individual coping with mental illness, a person looking for a new career or starting a new life in Montreal, Ometz is responsive to the ever-changing needs of our clientele. To find out more about Ometz, please visit www.ometz.ca

About the Interactive Museum of Jewish Montreal (IMJM)

The Interactive Museum of Jewish Montreal (IMJM) collects, maps, and shares the history and experiences of the Montreal Jewish community through exhibits, walking tours and online and mobile technology. A community-based and participatory institution, IMJM combines professionally curated exhibits with user-generated stories and images. To find out more about IMJM, please visit <http://imjm.ca>

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For information:

Mahalia Verna
Manager, Marketing & Communications
Ometz
Mahalia.verna@ometz.ca
(514) 342-0000 (#3468)