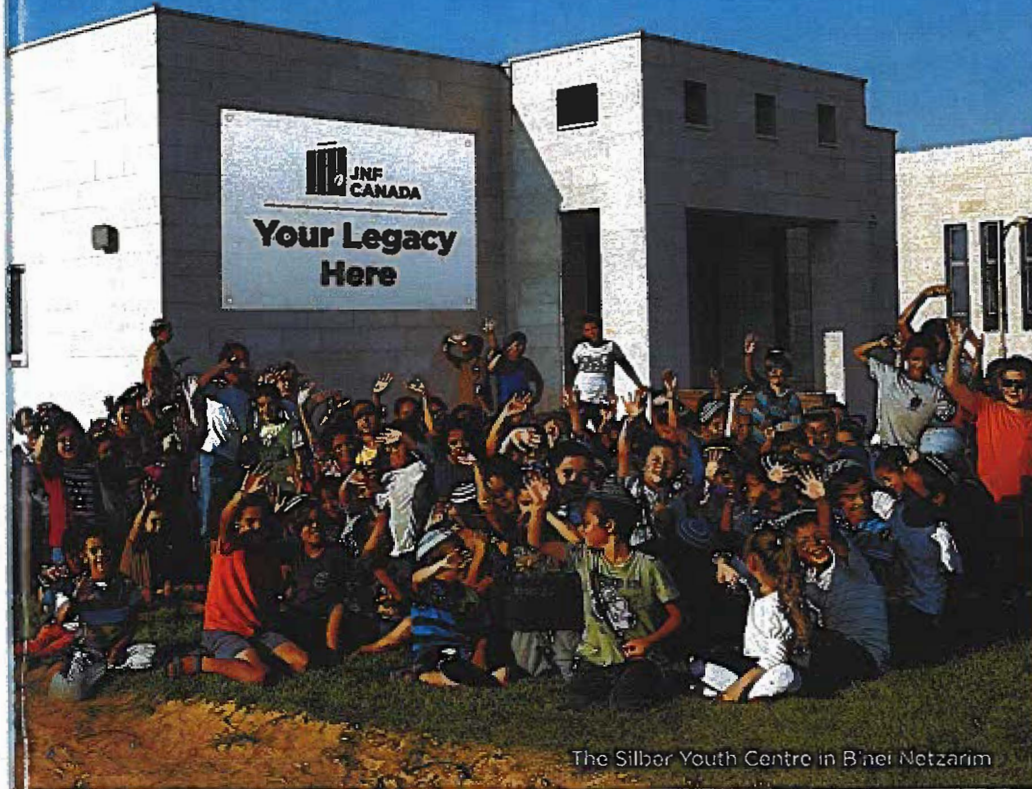


# ROOTS



The Silber Youth Centre in B'nei Netzarim



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740-5160 Decarie Blvd. Montreal, Quebec H3X 2H9  
[www.jnf.ca](http://www.jnf.ca) | [national@jnf.ca](mailto:national@jnf.ca)

# Human rights, environmentalism, and one couple determined to tackle both

Every year, JNF offices across Canada approach leaders in their communities in order to honour them at their local Negev events. This year, JNF Manitoba/ Saskatchewan's honourees were a particularly special match to their project.

When Nola Lazar, Manitoba/Saskatchewan Board President and David Greaves, Manitoba/Saskatchewan Executive Director considered the idea of the Climate Solutions Prize (CSP), they knew it would be a great fit for Gail Asper and Dr. Michael Paterson. After hearing their presentation, Gail and Michael were intrigued - CSP was closely aligned to both their philanthropic and professional work. Another appealing feature was the fact that the couple had never been honoured together!

Both Gail and Michael are known for their dedication to causes they care about - at home and in Israel. The CSP spoke directly to Michael's re-

search and career as a freshwater ecologist. He is the Senior Research Scientist at The International Institute for Sustainable Development's Experimental Lakes Area (the ELA). Michael's team works in a unique natural laboratory made up of 58 pristine freshwater lakes and watersheds in a remote part of northwestern Ontario. The entire area is designated for scientific research, examining how lake waters and creatures living there are affected by and recover from the effects of human activities such as nutrient pollution, contaminants, water level manipulations, fishing pressure, and climate change.

At a time when only about 0.3% of our planet's water is drinkable, the ELA's important work is linked to the pressing challenge of climate change. It also highlights the environment's inextricable connection to human rights that includes access to clean water, sanitation and protection from extreme weather events. Upon accepting the JNF



Negev honour, Michael noted that, "the causes of climate change, the environment and the Jewish community are very important to me, so I felt it would be wrong not to take this opportunity to try and raise awareness about them."

Through his work on water protection, Michael has collaborated with scientists from around the world, and has authored or co-authored more than 80 peer-reviewed publications. Today, work at the ELA is internationally recognized, and provides key insights that have been applied in other freshwater environments around the world.

Gail continues the legacy of her parents, Israel and Babs Asper z"l. After her father's passing, Gail took on the leadership role as President of The Asper Foundation. Her parents were dedicated philanthropists who held a deeply rooted commitment to leaving the world a better place (The Asper Family was honoured at the 2005 Negev Gala). As well, JNF and The Asper Foundation have worked together since 2002 to create four centres in Israel for at risk youth in Be'er Sheva, Ramot, Ofaqim and Migdal HaEmek. "Our family was a family of very strong Zionists so it makes sense that we would have a great fondness for JNF whose sole purpose is to strengthen Eretz Israel", Gail remarked.

Gail's determination to see projects through is legendary. She fulfilled her father's dream of cre-

ating The Canadian Museum for Human Rights -- the first of its kind in the world and the first national museum outside of Ottawa. With unrelenting resolve, and support from her team, Gail crisscrossed Canada for 14 years to raise more than \$350m to build it in Winnipeg. Gail has passionately dedicated her time and resources to supporting the performing arts in Canada and served as President of the Board of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre and Campaign Chair for its Capital and Endowment campaigns. Her community involvement includes chairing the Annual Campaign as well as the Board of the United Way of Winnipeg and chairing the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg's Annual Campaign. She received the Order of Manitoba and is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

JNF Manitoba/Saskatchewan's 2022 virtual gala was a huge success - 600 viewers attended and raised over \$800,000. A portion of the funds will also go to Winnipeg's Jewish Child & Family Service, and the World's Jewish Museum project in Tel Aviv.

Gail and Michael understand that science needs funding to succeed, especially in the early stages of research. They know that the Climate Solutions Prize will help provide that all-important kickstart to facilitate a breakthrough. And JNF gave them the opportunity to tell that message... together.