

Israel feature story

Shared society in Jerusalem

By SIMONE COHEN SCOTT

Last fall a Canadian city tour was arranged for two women from the Jerusalem Business Development Centre (or MATI, as its acronym is known in Hebrew), an Israeli NGO that promotes development of small businesses among under-served communities in Jerusalem. This NGO is a project of the Jerusalem Foundation: The tour, happening in May, is being sponsored by the Asper Foundation, in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg. I had the good fortune, in Jerusalem last month, to meet and visit with these two women, **Michal Shaul-Valej**, Deputy CEO, and **Riham Abu Snineh**, East Jerusalem Manager. It was enlightening to hear about the sensitive and important work these women are doing, and I'm looking forward to seeing them again and learning more when they visit Winnipeg on **May 7th, Sunday morning, 10 a.m., at the Asper Jewish Community Campus in the Multi Purpose Room.**



(l-r): Riham Abu Snineh, East Jerusalem Manager of MATI; Zvia Shelly, CEO of MATI; Michal Shaul-Valej, Deputy CEO, MATI. MATI or the Jerusalem Business Development Centre, as it is known in English, is an Israeli NGO that promotes development of small businesses among under-served communities in Jerusalem, and which is funded by the Jerusalem Foundation

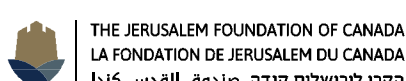
The Jerusalem Business Development Centre began in 1991 with the support of the Jerusalem Foundation, as a way to provide an economic solution to unemployment. Jerusalem, Israel's second largest city (after Tel Aviv) is also the poorest. To alleviate this extreme situation among immigrants and ultra *frum* Jews, 80% of whom live below the poverty line, and Arabs, 40% of whom also live below the poverty line, it was decided the best solution would be to help these people develop small businesses. So the NGO was formed to provide what would be needed to do this: MATI helps with the forming of the idea for a service or a product: provides the basics of how to begin; the education and training to see it through; a business plan; adaptation of business models; basic budget assessments; arranging loan assumption; and any further guidance; under-girded always by English and Hebrew instruction. Poverty problem solved, right? Nope! What MATI

offers is the easy part. It's what the clients bring that provides the challenge.

There is a depth of work behind the work that requires special sensitivity on the part of the staff and volunteers. An understanding of the various cultures is paramount, and resistance needs to be met with patience and empathy. Michal has been with MATI for 21 years, so she was in at the beginning. We can expect that her professional degrees have been massively enhanced by the challenges brought to the project. It has been said that Jerusalem and its myriad of problems is a microcosm of the planet. Trying to blend peoples' cultures and histories developed over centuries, while occupying a small geographic space, is not going to be like "Let's go for a walk in the park." Actually, even that analogy wouldn't be easy or maybe not even possible. People tend to stay in the groups where they feel safe. Think of the Haredi or Muslim or Ethiopian communities, all resisting normalization. Each culture has a hesitancy to trust, and it can take a long time for a person to realize the 'other' does not have a hidden agenda besides just helping. It would have taken Michal or Riham (who has been with MATI 11 years), patience, empathy, and perseverance, to win that trust, even when a better quality of life is the goal. Every member of the 23 person staff would have to be ultra sensitive, committed, and strong, as modelled by these managers, to do this work. In effect, they would all be mentoring the clients and each other.

Immigrant women are perhaps the most able to see and respond to the professionalism of this organization. With the help of MATI many of them have set up child care enterprises, enabling other women to pursue other occupations. This is the case in all the communities. The solution to the

(Continued on opposite page.)



Shared Society in Jerusalem how we live together

The Jerusalem Foundation presents a conversation about shared living in Jerusalem sponsored by The Asper Foundation and in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg.

From MATI, the Jerusalem Business Development Center, Michal Shaul Vulej, Deputy CEO and Reham Abu Snineh, East Jerusalem Manager, will speak about their experiences and working to help empower and support under-served communities in work force development and business opportunities.

Sunday, May 7 at 10:00 AM
Multi Purpose Room
Asper Jewish Community Campus

Pre-registration at
www.jewishwinnipeg.org

www.jerusalemfoundation.org



Letters/Israel story

IHRA definition of antisemitism debated at City Hall committee

Ed. note: We have provided detailed reports on the IHRA definition of antisemitism in previous issues, without wanting to take sides on the issue ourselves. Following upon a meeting of the Human Rights Committee at City Hall on Monday, March 27, we received an email from Diane Zack about what took place at that meeting. In the interest of fairness though, and since Diane offers her own particular perspective on what took place at that meeting, we invited Belle Jarniewski, who herself played an important role in crafting the IHRA definition of antisemitism, to respond to Diane's two-part email. You can see Belle's response to the following email from Diane Zack on page 7.

Hi Bernie,

I assume the reason you weren't at City Hall on Monday for the Human Rights Committee deliberation about the IHRA definition of anti-semitism was that you were busy putting to bed the 48-page Passover edition. Congratulations on this large issue.

The letter attached is intended to give a bit of the point of view of those opposed to the adoption of the motion (and I was one of the presenters against; we were the majority of the 20 presenters) but also to give some basic information about the meeting for yourself and the readers of JP&N.

As this issue continues to unfold, given the decision of the Human Rights Committee to defer their decision on the motion, I hope that you will be open to carrying on this important discussion in the pages of the newspaper. Perhaps in a way other than through Letters to the Editor, but in more substantive op-ed pieces.

Regards,
Diane Zack

Dear JP&N,

On Monday afternoon, March 27, the Human Rights Committee of the City of Winnipeg met to consider the motion to adopt the controversial IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism. This is a volunteer committee of 12 people, with two elected City Councillors on it, Markus Chambers and Sherri Rollins. At the March 27th meeting, Councillor Chambers chaired the meeting, while Councillor Rollins was not present. Eight of the 12 members were present. Councillor Chambers was the sponsor of the motion to adopt the IHRA definition at the committee meeting.

This letter is written to present information to the readers of JP&N about that very important meeting.

In the end, Councillor Chambers moved an amendment to only receive the motion as information, saying that it was apparent more discussion was needed before making a decision. He said the committee would like to confer further with representatives of all the groups present. On the anti-motion side, this included Independent Jewish Voices (IJV), United Jewish People's Order (UJPO) and others.

There were 20 presenters who had registered to speak at the meeting, either for or against the motion to adopt. Two-thirds of the presenters spoke against the motion. I was one of those. The people speaking against the motion represented a variety of backgrounds and interests, both women and men, Jewish and non-Jewish, and altogether, gave very convincing arguments as to why the definition should not be adopted. One of the presenters, a Palestinian-Canadian, who was born in a refugee camp in Israeli-occupied Gaza, explained how the adoption of this definition would send a chill through the Palestinian-Canadian community, who would feel further threatened and intimidated to voice their support for their people's continuing struggles for justice. He referred to the many times Palestinians and their supporters have had events and tables cancelled at university campuses and other places due to the pro-Israeli lobby claiming pro-Palestinian events would violate their rights.

It was agreed by both sides that anti-Semitism must be opposed. But the IHRA definition is not the way to accomplish this. It was pointed out by several presenters against the motion that 7 of the 11 illustrative examples which are an integral part of the definition, refer to Israel; the upshot is that criticism of Israel will be considered as anti-Semitism. Even though the proponents of the definition quoted a line in the definition to the contrary, this began to sound like a broken record, and came across as very ineffective, because their own presentation of the categories of Jewish identity included 'Jews as a nation', which means the state of Israel. However, not all Jews in the world consider themselves part of the 'Jewish nation'.

There is a lot more to be said about this important question, and we urge readers of JP&N to take the matter seriously, and to keep their minds open to the reality of what has happened and continues to happen to Palestinians who have lost their homes, who live in Gaza, the largest 'open prison' camp in the world, under Israeli occupation.

We hope the Jewish Post & News will want to keep this discussion going in the coming months.

Regards,
Diane Zack
Winnipeg

For an alternative perspective about what happened at City Hall on March 27, turn to pages 7 & 8.

(Continued from page 4.)

poverty problem could very well come from entreprenuring women. The next step, reaching across boundaries and interacting with each other, would chip away at the societal alienation going on now. The composition of the staff reflects this propensity of women clients. At present of the 8 staff in East Jerusalem and 15 in the West, only 3 are men. I didn't ask about the ratio of single mothers. This could be a question for the May 7th meeting.

A tangible difficulty among immigrants is that there is no common language, so explaining aspects of the project to the participants is difficult. Language is an even more severe barrier with Arab groups. East Jerusalem citizens, under the Jordanian education system, are not conversant in Hebrew at all, and in most cases not English either. It is realized that bringing the eastern section of the city into the economic pattern of the west is part of the goal, and for this, to speak English is paramount. Fortunately, English classes are attracting students from various streams. In fact English classes are currently the strongest incentive for members of the groups to mix a little. One point here: As I spoke to these women I realized they would not let themselves get bogged down with regret at what perhaps SHOULD have been done in the past. No, they won't dwell on that; instead, they look forward and up, putting their shoulder to the wheel to overcome past misjudgments. NOW. MATI has open connections with City Hall which have been very helpful in many ways,

At a point in my visit with Michal and Riham we were joined by Zvia Shelly, the CEO of MATI. She has been with the group two and a half years, but my goodness! What a powerhouse of skills she brings to the mix. She has spent a couple of decades with various organizations where she has gained massive experience with management agencies, local authorities, large scale-budgets, stakeholders, volunteers and staff recruiting, strategic planning, goal setting, immigrant absorption, education and culture, and even agriculture which is hoped will contribute to bridging the gap. This is a formidable trio of women. Perhaps they will be the ones who break-up the log jam that forms that troublesome Jerusalem microcosm.

When the beloved Mayor Teddy Kolleck (z"l) began the Jerusalem Foundation he intended opportunities to be available for all society everywhere to help in making Jerusalem truly "...the joy of the whole earth...". Having just experienced the retelling of our Exodus from Egypt, we long for our Holy City: "Next year in Jerusalem". Attend on May 7th and hear more from these woman about what's going on there. You'll come away enriched.



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