

A Unique and Historical Milestone: **Gala Celebrates Montreal's Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue 250th Anniversary**

***** For Immediate Release:*****

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, the first Jewish Congregation in Canada, which began in Montreal, celebrated its 250th anniversary with a gala last week.

As Canada's first Jewish congregation, the Spanish & Portuguese opened their doors in 1768. Founded by Simon Levy and Aaron Hart, it was established in a rented space on St. James Street where approximately 15-20 Jewish Montrealers congregated to pray. "Even at that time, there were many membersthat came from prominent families that included the Joseph, Hays, David, Solomon and Wolff families", states congregation President Edmond Elbaz.

Today the Spanish & Portuguese synagogue is home to a culturally diverse membership of over 800 families, many of whom emigrated to Canada from countries including Iraq, Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Eastern Europe, and most recently from France.

Over 500 guests celebrated the synagogue's 250th anniversary at a gala held on May 10th at the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue in the Cote-des-Neiges area. Gala co-chairs were, businessman Ron Mashaal and community leader Arlene Abitan. Master of Ceremonies extraordinaire was Catherine Verdon-Diamond, Breakfast TV personality. Guests of honor were Rabbi Howard and Dr. Norma Joseph. The gala was an opportunity to take pride in the synagogue's past and look towards its future. Dignitaries and community leaders in attendance included The Honorable Irwin Cotler, MP Anthony Housefather, Mr. David Amiel, CJA President, Consul General of Spain, D. Antonio Luis Bullón Camarasa, new CEO of CJA Mr. Yair Zlak, MNA Mr. David Birnbaun, Mr. David Levy, new Consul General of Israel, Lionel Perez, Montreal City Counselor and Leader of the Opposition, Mindy Pollak Outremont Borough City Councillor and Magda Popeanu ,Vice-President of Executive Committee and Cote-des-Neiges City Councillor. Guests enjoyed an evening of cocktails, a sit down dinner, speeches in recognition of the synagogue's 250th anniversary, as well in honor of Rabbi & Dr. Norma Joseph. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sent a video congratulatory message to the congregation. Dinner was followed by a concert by internationally known singer **Enrico Macias** with a beautiful dessert table to conclude the evening.

The fundraising gala would not have been a possibility without its generous sponsors including: CIBC, The Mashaal Family, the Aintabi Family, Irwin Miller, Philip Lawee & Family, David Nathaniel & Family, HSBC, RBC, David Azouri & Family, Ron Gabbay & Family, Arlene Abitan and Family, Mike Yuval & Family, Marc Kakon & Family, Delmar International, Gewurz Family (Proment), Reuben & Goodman Families (Medicom & Pharmascience) and Armand Afilalo (MEP Technologies). Their support will allow the synagogue to continue to meet the needs of the community.

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L-R: Ron Mashaal, Albert Tauby, Eli Hadid, Edmond Elbaz, Henri & Arlene Abitan, Suzanne Elbaz, Amy Hadid, Sandra Mashaal, Sandra Koukou



Guests of Honor: Rabbi Howard Joseph and Norma Joseph and family



Singer Enrico Macia and grandson