

FEATURES

LOS ANGELES

Lots of Jewish flavour when visiting Los Angeles

Mike Cohen

QUEBEC BUREAU CHIEF

According to Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, the Los Angeles Jewish community is in a state of flux thanks to a constant deluge of newcomers: Persian Jews, Russian Jews, Israelis, a large population of openly gay and lesbian Jews and a constant stream of creative young Jews from around the world lured by the entertainment industry. Even Eric Garcetti, the city's mayor, personifies this ethnic mosaic, with a Mexican-American father, a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish wife.

There is a substantial Jewish community in the Los Angeles area. Persian Jews make up a sizeable proportion of the population of Beverly Hills – 26 per cent or 34,000 people, in fact. Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, tens of thousands of Persian Jews migrated from Iran, forming one of the wealthiest waves of immigrants to ever come to the United States. The community is credited with revitalizing Beverly Hills and redeveloping its architecture, and for the development of ornate mansions across the city.

Jewish names dotted the names of many of the buildings we drove by. When we went to the CBS Television studios to see a live taping of *Ameri-*



A look at what The Bloc in downtown Los Angeles will look like after the renovation.

can Idol, right next door was the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust. Stopping by the David Yurman designer jewellery store on North Rodeo Drive, we were assisted by Maor Batito. She came to LA from Israel eight years ago.

Synonymous with luxury, from world famous Rodeo Drive to five-star restaurants and hotels, Beverly Hills (www.lovebeverlyhills.com) is one must stop on any visit to California. The Sofitel Los Angeles at Beverly

Hills (<http://www.sofitel-los-angeles.com/en>) at 8555 Beverly Blvd. blends Hollywood glamour, European elegance and French style to create a sophisticated experience. The hotel boasts a prime location, one mile from Beverly Hills and West Hollywood, at the epicentre of LA style. It is across the street from the Beverly Shopping Center. There are 295 rooms here on 10 floors, including 26 suites and two presidential suites.

Many of LA's best restaurants are in Beverly Hills. On North Beverly Drive, you will find St. Urbain Bagels and Nate 'N Al of Beverly Hills Delicatessen - two spots with deep Jewish backgrounds. Native Montrealer Rudy Meleiezzer opened the former and upon entering the bagel and sandwich stop you are greeted by a message which describes St. Urbain Street in Montreal and its Jewish history. The latter was established in 1945 and is one of the Los Angeles

area's most noted Jewish delis.

The magnificent Mastro's Restaurant – www.mastrosrestaurants.com – has one of its flagship steakhouses at 246 North Canon Dr. in Beverly Hills. Mark Levy is the Jewish chairman of the chain, recognized as one of the top 10 steakhouses in the US, as well as for its sumptuous seafood selections and famous warm butter cake.

Downtown Los Angeles (www.discoverlosangeles.com) is an area known for a fabulous convention centre, the magnificent Staples Center, the LA Live Entertainment complex and many other attractions.

Jonathan Litvack, the Jewish general manager of the large Sheraton Los Angeles Downtown Hotel (www.sheratonlosangelesdowntown.com), has announced that a \$40 million renovation of the 495-room property will begin soon. It already has two restaurants, a lobby lounge, a full-service business centre, a fitness centre and a Macy's in the same building. The facelift is part of a \$160-million development of the immediate area to be known as The Bloc.

"Some very exciting changes are taking place at our hotel that will create a more inviting atmosphere for our guests to relax or connect with friends, family and colleagues," said Litvack.

LOS ANGELES

Ex-Montrealer marks three decades with Canadian consulate in LA

Mike Cohen

QUEBEC BUREAU CHIEF

For Montreal native Roz Wolfe, California truly is home. The senior officer responsible for foreign policy and diplomacy service has been working at the Canadian Consulate General in Los Angeles for 31 years now. She had arrived here four years earlier with her husband Michael, teaching for two years at Pepperdine University and then devoted another two years as a legislative analyst for city council and then Mayor Tom Bradley.

The *Jewish Tribune* caught up with Wolfe, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, at the recent Intel ISEF (International Science and Engineering Fair) at the Los Angeles Convention Centre, where she was guiding recently appointed Consul General James Villeneuve to the kiosks of Canadian finalists.

The Canadian Consulate General has a staff of more than 60 people. Its territory covers Southern California, Nevada and Arizona. Physically located on South Hope Street, not far from the popular Sheraton Down-

town Los Angeles, the office's primary mandate is trade. However, a lot of energy is extended towards processing visa and immigration fees, visitor visas, and work and study permits.

"We are the second largest of all Canadian consulates in the world next to the one in Mexico," said Wolfe.

Villeneuve represents the 10th Consul under whom General Wolfe has served. Not only did she work closely with former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell in this same role for four years, Wolfe also played matchmaker. She introduced Campbell to Montreal-born Jewish musician Hershey Felder. They soon became a couple and were married.

Wolfe has never forgotten her roots, or the fact that she is the daughter of Holocaust survivors.

"My parents lost their entire family in the Holocaust," she said. "I bring that to the office with me every day."

"My father was hidden by a Polish Catholic family for 18 months. They saved his life. In fact, there was such a bond that he and his brothers saved up enough money to move them all

to Montreal. They all live here now and became part of our extended family. It really is a special story."

Wolfe has managed to connect her Judaism to her day-to-day duties. The much acclaimed Museum of Tolerance, a facility created by the Simon Wiesenthal Center, represents a regular stop for dignitaries. She has used that venue for Canadian film screenings by Jewish personalities.

Wolfe spends a lot of time working on social media for the consulate these days. One of the recent highlights was a west coast visit by David Johnston, governor general of Canada and former McGill University principal – a first by anyone in that position. During his visits to Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle, he engaged with government representatives, business leaders, innovators, academic influencers and researchers to share knowledge and expertise on the themes of innovation and trade, education and philanthropy. Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, who goes back some 30 years with Villeneuve, was here last winter. Before his appointment last Febru-



Roz Wolfe meets with Montreal Intel ISEF competitor Wilfred Mason. (Photo: Mike Cohen)

ary, Villeneuve worked for Anheuser Busch InBev, the world's largest brewing company and the parent company of Labatt Breweries, for more than 27 years.

"James has really hit the ground running," said Wolfe, who ironically grew up on a street in Montreal's old Jewish Plateau neighbourhood called Villeneuve.

"He is a wonderful person to work with. The moment I told him about the Intel ISEF, he wanted to attend and meet some of the kids. These

kinds of things are very important to him."

The Intel ISEF attracted more than 1,700 participants from 70 countries. Not only did this include half a dozen projects from Israel, but Jewish participants from across North America dotted the field. This included Amit Scheer, 15, from Ottawa, who was among the fourth place finishers for his project entitled *Personalized Medicine: A Novel Quantum Dot Bioconjugate Targeted Cancer Therapy*.