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Order of Canada taps Jaffe; NATIONAL HONOUR: Londoner has a far-reaching reputation for tackling violence against all humans

BYLINE: BY RANDY RICHMOND

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Peter Jaffe still remembers the day his sister arrived at an exclusive club in Quebec's Laurentians to compete in a swim meet.

On the front door was a sign: No Jews Allowed.

Meet officials removed her from the race.

From his parents' escape from Nazi Germany to the discrimination his family faced in 1950s Quebec, Jaffe gained his perspective on the world.

"Because of what my parents went through, I grew up with a strong sense of social justice," the Londoner said yesterday, a day after being named an Officer of the Order of Canada.

He was raised as well to appreciate his family's new country -- despite the anti-semitism a far cry from Hitler's Germany.

"I grew up every day being told how lucky I was to live in Canada."

That combination of pride in country and the fight for social justice culminated with Jaffe's appointment to the Order, announced by Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean.

Jean named 60 new appointments, including hockey great Wayne Gretzky, retired Supreme Court justice Michel Bastarache and former politicians John Manley, Anne McLellan and Roy McMurtry.

Jaffe, 60, is academic director of the Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, a professor of education at the University of Western Ontario and director emeritus of the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System.

A long-time public school board trustee as well, Jaffe has earned a reputation in London, Canada and the rest of the world for tackling violence against women, children and men.

The governor general's announcement making Jaffe an Officer noted "his influential work and extensive voluntarism in improving the response of Canada's legal, educational and social service systems to family violence and the abuse of women and children."

After getting an undergraduate degree in psychology from McGill University in 1970, Jaffe moved to Western for his master's and doctorate.

In 1973, he began working with London police on domestic violence.

Jaffe remembers one of his first calls, to the hospital bed of a woman badly beaten by her husband. Checking in with her a few days later, he was surprised to see flowers by her bed and a note of apology from her husband that was tempting her to return.

"I realized it (domestic violence) wasn't going to be a quick fix," Jaffe said. "Back then, none of us knew what we were doing."

Since then, Jaffe has raised the profile of the issue to a national and international level, most recently helping to organize the first Canadian Conference on the Prevention of Domestic Homicides. He's also at the forefront of the movement to ban fighting and other forms of violence in hockey.

Jaffe learned last year a colleague had nominated him for the Order of Canada.

"It's an honour someone thinks enough of you to nominate you," he said.

Jaffe will receive the Order at a later ceremony. He celebrated yesterday by looking after his children and getting out the door in time for baseball.

"I'm in the Order of Canada. I shouldn't be making lunches," he joked as the chaos of an ordinary household could be heard through the telephone.

"My family," Jaffe said before getting back to his chores, "keeps me beyond humble."