MEET ARTHUR

Arthur in Poland, 1936.

Arthur Ney was a Holocaust survivor who immigrated to Canada after the war and settled in Montreal. You can learn about his experiences by reading his memoir, *W Hour*, or on the digital resource Re:Collection.

Below is some background that will help you understand Arthur's story.

BIOGRAPHY:

Arthur was born in 1930 in Warsaw, Poland. He lived with his parents, beloved older sister, Eugenia, and extended family. His middle-class family owned a dry cleaning business and they lived in a mainly Jewish neighbourhood. Soon after the German occupation of Poland, hundreds of thousands of Jews including Arthur's family were forced to live in the Warsaw ghetto under terribly crowded conditions. The ghetto was set up in the area of the city where Arthur's family lived, so they didn't have to move, but life changed drastically. In order to help feed his family, Arthur snuck in and out of the ghetto to trade items for food. On the first day of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943, Arthur was outside of the ghetto, so he did not know what happened to his family. For the rest of the war he lived under a false identity, posing as a Catholic, moving from place to place, and eventually finding shelter at an orphanage. He participated in the Polish uprising against the Germans in Warsaw and witnessed the Soviet army's liberation of the city. After the war Arthur learned that his immediate family had been killed, but that his aunt and uncle had survived. With other orphans he travelled to France and considered where to settle, before deciding on Canada in 1948.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Poland is a country in central Europe, located between Germany and Russia. It had a large Jewish population, which alarmed some Poles who felt **antisemitism** towards them. Jews faced discrimination in Poland before World War II, but many were also part of Polish culture and society. World War II began with the German invasion of Poland in September **1939** and occupation of western Poland; later that month Germany's then ally the Soviet Union occupied the eastern part of Poland. Immediately the German occupiers began to persecute Jews, including by forcing them into **ghettos** – small walled-off parts of cities guarded by Germans. Warsaw was the capital of Poland and the Warsaw ghetto was the largest ghetto. In **1942**, Polish Jews began to be deported to Nazi camps and killing centres that were located in Poland. In April **1943**, when the Nazis entered the ghetto to deport the remaining inhabitants, about 750 organized ghetto fighters launched an uprising, while the other inhabitants took shelter in hiding places and underground bunkers. The resistance fighters were defeated after a month. It was very hard for Jews to survive the war in Poland; some tried to hide with friends or used false identity papers, hoping they could stay undetected until the war ended. Liberation came to Warsaw in early **1945**. Approximately **3,000,000** Polish Jews were killed in the Holocaust, including Arthur's family members.

"I felt like a traitor to my own people, especially to my family. Yet, life had to go on and I eventually came to a conclusion that saved my sanity: I had a right to live and if conversion enabled me to survive, so be it."
—ARTHUR NEY