

## **Ambassador Meeting -- Reporting Summary -- December 29, 2013**

### **Hosted by :**

Group stats: Number of attendees (not including hosts): 10

Number born and raised in Edmonton: 4 (Only 1 resided entire life here. 3 moved away and returned.)

Number who moved to Edmonton: 6

Average length of time in the city (of those who moved to Edmonton): 29 years.

### **Discussion**

#### **1. What brought you to Edmonton? How long have you been here?**

- Born in Edmonton.
- Moved to Edmonton with spouse who was born here. 27.5 years.
- Emigrated from South Africa to be close to children. 12.5 years.
- Emigrated from South Africa. 32 years.
- Born in Edmonton. Lived 10 years in Vancouver. Returned to Edmonton.
- Originally from Montreal, then London, Ontario. In Edmonton 6 years.
- Born in Edmonton.
- Family moved to Edmonton when a youngster. 67 years.
- Born in Edmonton. Lived in Toronto and Calgary. Returned to Edmonton 30 years.
- Moved to Edmonton with spouse. 30 years.

#### **2. How do you find Jewish community life generally in Edmonton?**

- Frustrating. Community was cohesive 30 years ago. Do not feel same unity now. Orthodox community is isolated.
- Feeling of isolation in orthodox community. Feel self-reliant. There is growth in programming.
- Moved here and found lots of opportunity in community. It is supportive and open to new ideas of programming. There is more energy, interaction and unit now.
- Born in Edmonton. JCC was active. Moved away. Returned and found JCC less active. Community is accepting of mixed marriage. We need a non-denominational place.
- There is more orthodoxy in Edmonton now than ever before. In early years everyone sent their children to Talmud Torah. There is a void in the Jewish community now as the Executive Director is leaving and we do not have a building. What we have now is what every community has – diversity.
- The community has grown in a positive way. This participant stands for the big tent community – open to all. The community has grown in institutions. Diversity is with us. Edmonton does a remarkable job for a small community. The promise of tomorrow is not necessarily linked to a building but to the big tent.

- The problem is not that there is no tent. There are too many divisions within the tent. We have a hyper divided community. There is too much emphasis on differences rather than common interests.
- There is lots of community interest in the aged and very young but not much in teens and young adults.
- The Muslim community has grown from 35,000 to about 80,000 in 12 years. The mosque in the west end serves 10,000 people. The Jewish community lacks population. We need a facility but cannot overbuild.
- The Edmonton Jewish community is small but there is lots of activity.

**3. Thinking of your aspirations/expectations of community life, what would you like to see the community offer that would enrich your Jewish life? Do you see any challenges/barriers to realizing those aspirations?**

- The barriers are money and small population. Would like to see a building for Jewish people in general regardless of their denomination. Would like programs for all ages and a place where people can gather and eat. Would like a Jewish non-denominational camp.
- Would like cultural programming for all ages, also things that connect our community to other communities. Want organized Jewish life. Challenges are money and developing leaders, both lay and professional.
- We should promote the community more to attract people to move here. The community should provide more help for people to find jobs and offer more assistance.
- Edmonton is an age friendly city. Our facility should be age friendly.
- We need a community kashrut authority. We should attract people from Montreal. We need an eruv. Barriers are money, lack of a collective will and lack of leadership. We have problems with privacy rules as we cannot find out who in hospital is Jewish. We need record keeping of the Jewish community and sharing of information. It is important to have day care and participant is happy with what we have now. Barrier is money. Facility must be in the west end.
- Programming must be appropriate. We need a community meeting hall but not necessarily a gym. The barrier is to live within our budget.
- Participant is happy with the community. We should keep functions affordable.
- We must think of the Jewish people as a people. Subdivisions should be overridden by a central authority.
- We need strong leadership to coalesce the community. Participant hopes these ideas will not be lost and will be considered.
- It would be wonderful to have a building but we need to be careful about what to put into it.

**4. What value might there be in having a central gathering place for the Jewish community, and what purpose(s) might it serve?**

- It is important to have a meeting place but we need reasons to bring people together.

- It must be approachable, affordable, and attractive.
- Programs, activities and personnel are more important than bricks and mortar.
- Agree with previous comment.
- We need an auditorium. It must be a multi-use facility including availability for social functions such as Bar/Bat Mitzvah parties. It should be a facility that we can rent out and bring in revenue. We need a dance studio.
- The facility is a potential money maker, a place for simchas. The facility can be an ambassador of our community and bring outside people in.
- When bombings happened at Beth Shalom and Beth Israel, communal meetings were held at the JCC so the concept of a multi-use facility is the way to go.
- The community should consider investigating the Provincial Museum as a location.
- Participant would like to see a day camp. The best location would be Talmud Torah. We need a campus concept preferably with Talmud Torah.

### **Host Feedback**

Since the hosts had attended a previous meeting we refrained from expressing our opinions at this meeting and acted as facilitators for all the other participants to give their thoughts. The statistics at the beginning do not include the hosts.