

## Ambassador Reporting Summary

**Date:** February 24, 2014

**Number of attendees:** 5

**Number born and raised in Edmonton:** 4

**Number who moved to Edmonton:** 1

**Average length of time in the City:** 21 years

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

- University & came 2 years ago.
- Born here & I like the community here, it's a nice City with good employment opportunities.
- Born here & family keeps me here. It's convenient & there is a good University.
- Born here. Comfortable here & close to family & University.
- Born here & after University will likely move away to a larger City.

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

- Strong community in Edmonton given its small size. It's welcoming & close knit.
- It has changed a lot in the last 10 years. When I was growing up more people seemed involved but today less people are involved.
- We do okay for a small population. We can work on engagement. We are perceived as being lazy and not as innovative as we could be by National Jewish organizations.
- We do a ton of holocaust programming but don't do other innovative programming.
- Agree with above. We have a solid base but as apathy grows we feel a sense of disconnect.
- There is a drain on young people as many move away.
- Edmonton is very unwelcoming if you don't fit in. For instance, if you are LGBT it's very difficult & basically there is nothing keeping this group in Edmonton.
- It's tough to be actively Jewish in Edmonton. It's easy to be Jewish in a large City.
- 75% of my friends are not Jewish.
- Unfortunately a small percentage of young Jewish adults come out to Jewish events & functions.
- We are only able to connect with other Anglo born young adults. Have a big problem engaging the Russian & Israelis.
- I think the community is warm for those that are involved.
- Outsiders probably don't know how to connect.
- There is certainly a lot going on in Edmonton.
- A lot of people feel they have to base their Judaism in the Synagogues or "traditional" routes but rather we need to engage in something outside of the box & the normal paradigm.
- Have lived in lots of communities & I think the Jewish Community is very welcoming.
- It's hard "to do Jewish" without going traditional.
- Apathy is the biggest problem. People are looking for vibrant & interesting programming.
- Most people have at least one 2 or 3 close Jewish friends.

- Are we apathetic because we are of the millennial generation or is it a deeper and structural cause in the community? It's likely more generational for me and my peers.
- What can the community do for me versus what can I do for the community.
- There seems to be a lack of will or investment on my generation's part.
- It's one thing to get unaffiliated out to an event but how do you get them to engage past this one event?

**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?**

- Would like to see more Post University programming for people in their mid-20's to early 40's & would like to see events take place more quickly and regularly.
- Capture people when we can.
- Our main barrier is that we don't enough have market penetration. Maybe we reach 60% but for many it might be only once in a year.
- We have even less interaction with those that we wish to engage.
- Some people come out to everything and others nothing. We need to see more faces that typically don't come out.
- Need more community unity.
- Yes we have Hillel & Youth programming but need more programming for young adults.
- We need a physical and social space where we feel welcome & where it's relaxing and fun. Like Ben Klein's basement. (Ben was a former Youth Director at Beth Israel who lived in Walsh Cres. and he had an open door policy on Thursday nights that at any time teens could drop by & there was always food & they could play pool or ping pong or video games on his big screen TV & simply hang out. It was very popular).
- Many young people don't want a synagogue event or feel that they are being lectured to.
- Biggest challenge will be finances and upkeep. There are costs to build and maintain a centre.
- Barriers is numbers. 60% of Jewish kids from my high school graduating class have left.
- Hopefully I'll become a young professional but won't be a Jewish professional.
- Work life balance is important & I feel that the Jewish Community is important for that.
- Need something that Jews feel comfortable & not necessarily rely on traditional forms or spaces.
- Intergenerational & mentoring programs would be great.
- Engagement issues.
- Other challenges are that we sometimes get stuck in a rut & lack creativity.
- Financial barriers.
- Edmonton has a bad rap for its politics and being divisive. In the past year I've felt a lot of divisions.
- We need to engage within the various communities in the City. For instance, each Synagogue has its own group & even within those groups you have cliques. Like the "hip/cool" kids at Ross Shepp known as the "Jew Crew".
- We need more outreach. There are lots of students at MacEwan & Concordia but unlike Hillel at U. of A., I don't think we are reaching them at all.
- A Hillel House would be fantastic but I realize it's a matter of cost.
- Pub night with an open tab.

- Emotionally there is extreme divineness.
- People don't want to challenge the taboo & if some has a different opinion or sexual orientation we don't want to engage them & they are seen as an outcast.
- Tear down Judaism to build up Edmonton.

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

- Value in a central gathering spot would be immensely high!
- Steps that we've taken by selling the building & this consultation process is important but the process has been detrimental. When you think of a Community, you automatically think of a Centre but it's been terrifying because for a long time we didn't know what the Federations next steps were going to be & there was very little said until a few months ago.
- Having a new location is very important for young families & the livelihood of the Community.
- The physical building needs to be much smaller than the old JCC but I would like us to think creatively.
- What about an ice rink? We are a winter city & hockey & skating are very popular activities. The City will help fund an arena provided they get first dibs during minor hockey week. It could service BBYO, Hillel, EJHL as well as be rented out to outside groups that would pay market for it. Ice time is in huge demand in Edmonton.
- New centre should have meeting rooms, kosher deli, exercise facilities, library.
- It should be engaging for youth & kids but also for seniors & the religious in our community.
- It should be a warm welcoming place for all Jews of all ages & affiliations.
- I have fond memories of the old JCC where I learned to swim & the snack bar etc.
- It would help the psychology of the Community greatly to have a physical building.
- To have a warm relaxing Jewish environment to meet friends & when I have a children to bring them to play with other Jewish friends & mix with the parents.
- Office space for the various organizations is important.
- It needs to be located where the majority of the community lives.
- Would love to have a similar experience for my kids that I had at the old JCC.
- Would like to see some exercise amenities.
- Gym could be important.
- Don't need a pool.
- Outdoor space would be nice too.
- The JCC in Scottsdale is incredible.
- Concerned that the voices are too much of the aging generation & we might not be reaching the younger generation or listening to their voices.
- Play area for kids.
- JCC should be neutral turf.
- A youth/teen lounge that contains an entertainment centre with high end games, pool table, big screen TV & air hockey for instance would be important.
- The physical location is huge. The priority should be the land next to Talmud Torah. T.T. is the strongest focal point of our community.
- I don't see myself going downtown to visit the JCC.
- If in West Edm. It'll be better.

- Should consider a small study hall or quiet area in the building & study lounge for students.
- Food is important.
- We are a growing City & we should consider building additional office space so that some of it can be rented out for revenue.
- We need to build for the future & not just for the next five years.
- If we build recreation & exercise facilities they must be good & we'll need to charge market for them. \$60/month for City pass or \$42/month for student pass at YMCA.
- Membership would get you into everything.
- Need a physical structure.
- It should be built where the community is or close to it.
- We don't need work out facilities nor a pool, however, we do need one big draw from a leisure & recreation perspective & perhaps that could be an auditorium for performing arts & dance studios.
- We should have free common space & for socializing.
- Auditorium or theatre that would seat 150 people.
- Not sold on West end location. 1/3 of the community lives East of 142 St.
- \$5 Million won't get you much.
- Concerned about sustainability.
- What can we afford to build & then maintain?
- It's a lot of work raising money.
- We need to be fiscally responsible.
- Don't make it exclusive for Jewish use only.
- Needs to be enticing.
- T.T. is still a political force & yet there are people downtown who we shouldn't forget about.
- Potential for small Hillel room in Beit Horim, which is closer to U. of A. & very close to MacEwan University.