

Ambassador Reporting Summary

Date: January 21, 2014

Number of attendees: 6

Number born and raised in Edmonton: 1 and one other that moved to Edmonton at a very young age

Number who moved to Edmonton: 4

Average length of time in the City: 24 years

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

☑ Came to Alberta in 2006 for work opportunity and moved to Edmonton for life opportunities 4 years ago.

☑ School. 11 years ago.

☑ Husband's work and community. 11 years ago.

☑ Dad came for work when individual was very young in the 1960's.

☑ Born and raised. 60 years.

☑ Husband's work. 11 years ago.

2. How do you find Jewish community life generally?

☑ It's a very vibrant and very active Jewish community in terms of programming.

☑ It's satisfying although I find a duplication of services to a certain extent with programming that overlaps.

☑ Programming is quite remarkable given our relatively small numbers.

☑ Yes active and vibrant but just amongst a small percentage of the community that is active.

☑ We lack kosher restaurants.

☑ Also agree that there is a duplication of services and programs and that a JCC would help to reduce this duplication.

☑ It's a warm and welcoming community once you get involved and especially at the Synagogue level. When I first came to Edmonton for University, I felt that Hillel was cold and cliquy.

☑ It's active once you do get involved and see all that is going on.

☑ Beth Israel very welcoming from the beginning of my involvement in the Synagogue.

☑ There is a lot of duplication – multiple Purim, Chanukah and Lag B'Omer parties for instance.

☑ Yes agree and became involved in Federation to ensure that resources were not wasted on duplicating services and to prevent Chanukah carnivals that very few people showed up to.

☑ Chabad & B.I. have done a joint Lag B'Omer function for a couple of years now at Westridge Park.

☑ There is only one Yom Ha'Atzmaut party.

☑ It is difficult to combine major Jewish Holiday observance because all the shuls have different customs and religious practices.

- ☑ Coming from N.Y. I wasn't that involved because so much going on, it's easy to be Jewish and do your own thing but with a very small community like Edmonton, which is very welcoming, it's very important to be involved.
- ☑ There was a central place, JCC, when we first came to Edmonton, now everybody is doing their own thing and we need a centre.

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?

- ☑ This is a pay as you go community and I dislike that aspect of it. We tend to nickel and dime everyone and there is only so much money to go around.
- ☑ We need more participation from the unaffiliated, "hidden" Jews and also from those that are affiliated.
- ☑ We need to offer the unaffiliated something that they would be interested in. What is it? Not sure.
- ☑ I'm Jewish so anything that enhances my life will enhance my Jewish life.
- ☑ Would like to see more opportunity to socialize and hang out with a group of friends.
- ☑ There are many religious events in our calendar but would like more social opportunity.
- ☑ We do have Jewish hockey and slow pitch but in the past we had the Menorah Curling Club (owned the building by Kingsway Mall) and a co-ed Jewish bowling league.
- ☑ We definitely need the "right" venue.
- ☑ The community and Shuls offer a bunch of classes for instance, which is great, and it would best if they were located under one roof in a centralized location that is close to and accessible by the majority of the Jewish community.
- ☑ Education is one aspect and there is lots of social opportunity such as drop-in Israelis dance, or for a film night, Grey Cup and Super Bowl parties etc., etc.
- ☑ Would like to see more involvement with the young people in our community. Happy to see that J-Core is off to a good start and I'm hopeful that they can bridge the gap between the older segments of our community and the young people.
- ☑ Would like to see a place that has more people in our age demographic (young and newly married in their late 20's to early 30's) who are Jewish where we can build relationships, a sense of belonging and Community.
- ☑ Aspire to see more people getting involved and wanting to participate in a Jewish event.
- ☑ One barrier is how do we access the unaffiliated? How do they access and connect with the Jewish Community?
- ☑ How do we prevent young people from leaving?
- ☑ Would like to see a more formalized networking and mentoring committee to bring people into the fold of the larger community.
- ☑ How do help new immigrants find employment?
- ☑ One of Shalom Edmonton's mandates is to help Jews find employment.
- ☑ Would like to see more intergenerational programming with seniors and I think that they have a lot to offer. I.e. in Vancouver at the community school we saw grandparents routinely assisting/teaching kids how to play a musical instrument and there were programs where the grandkids helped their grand parents get aquatinted with computers etc.

- ☒ I would like the community to do a better job of looking after the less fortunate in our community and the seniors.
- ☒ I think JFS does a good job but it needs to be more than this one organization. There are elderly people we are “shut-ins” and are very lonely.
- ☒ Feel that the younger element of our community is not in touch with the Jewish Drop-in Centre.
- ☒ It’s hard because we get into our own little niche, lives, family, and work and we forget or neglect this demographic.
- ☒ We should consider the YMCA, Jamie Platz centre. It is already heavily used by a large percentage of the Jewish community. We could rent space there for Jewish, Federation programming.
- ☒ Perhaps we could add onto the building and have a Jewish section of the Platz and that could be our JCC.

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

- ☒ There is value in have a central gathering place where the Jewish community can congregate.
- ☒ It should be non-denominational so that all Jews will feel comfortable and welcome.
- ☒ There are many purposes that it could serve – education, social, parties, teen/youth lounge and an adult lounge with billiards, large screen TV and ping pong. Maybe it’s even licenced to serve alcoholic beverages.
- ☒ Must be a place where everyone feels welcome.
- ☒ There is a lot of divide in the community and a central, non-denominational gathering place will have great value in bringing the community closer.
- ☒ Also need to know that some people will never be interested and that we cannot appeal to everyone.
- ☒ With a physical building, we’ll have a better sense of what the Federation is doing.
- ☒ Without a physical building, it’s more difficult to be an umbrella group.
- ☒ It could be a place that could hold significant events and draw people in.
- ☒ Entertainment is good but also consider a library and holocaust education centre. Holocaust education is a part of the Alberta high school curriculum.
- ☒ Non-denominational is very important. We were fortunate to have the JCC with the pool and gym when our children were young and growing up.
- ☒ Would like to see a BBYO Teen lounge like the old centre had.
- ☒ We don’t need a gym, major fitness facility nor a swimming pool as we will not compete with the Platz.
- ☒ The purpose it could serve is by having multi-purpose rooms for some activities like dance, martial arts in addition to meeting rooms and office space.
- ☒ Would like to see an outdoor area, patio with BBQ’s.
- ☒ Dance is important and not just for Aviv but also for seniors (ball room dancing) or social dances for younger people and singles.
- ☒ At the end of these summaries we should consider wordle to see what words are most used and are at the top of the discussion list.

- ☒ Also should try and figure out what are our common values actually are, similar to what many companies do in terms of mission statements and corporate values etc.
- ☒ Centre should have food because “our lives as Jews revolve around food and our stomachs...”
- ☒ We could have a community cooler or freezer to store kosher meat.
- ☒ An indoor playground is crucial.
- ☒ One large community wide daycare could be housed in a new JCC. For working mothers there is no place to take their young children between the ages of 12-18 months.
- ☒ Previous committee looking at a new JCC discussed all of this and it was determined at that time that a free standing building with a basement and two above grade floors would suffice. Total square footage including basement was around 45,000 sf. It would have a gym with slide out seating/bleacher style to be used for theatre/auditorium events. It would have modest exercise facilities, office space, and multi-purpose areas with dividers to expand or contract to the size of the rooms depending on the event and numbers. It would house the archives and holocaust library and could be a centre for holocaust education. It would have a meat and dairy kitchen and food sales would be a component of revenue and also space could be rented in the community cooler/freezer.
- ☒ Federation should give serious consideration to doing something with Beth Israel as the land is owned, the Synagogue will need work and there is an opportunity to seriously redevelop the site and construct a building that could accommodate both a shul and federation building/JCC. Perhaps the synagogue becomes a tenant of the new JCC federation building?