

Ambassador Toolkit – Reporting Summary

Group stats:

Number of Attendees: 7

Number born and raised in Edmonton: 2

Number who moved to Edmonton: 5

Average length of time in the city in years: 25

1. What brought you to Edmonton:

- University and work - 25 years in Edmonton
- School and work - 35 years
- Work - 7 months
- Law School - 35 years
- Born here - 45 years
- Work - 26 years

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

- Thin and challenging. Small, assimilated community.
- Challenge to generate economies of scale. Some incredibly committed people, but otherwise largely disaffected community.
- Provides our family with as many opportunities as I had growing up in Montreal. I am satisfied with what is here.
- Not the same resources as in larger communities I have lived in.
- Jewish institutions are highly under-staffed.
- Broad range of organizations.
- Being Jewish in Edmonton or Calgary, you have to go a little further afield to partake of the Jewish cultural world.
- From the religious aspect, have felt very much at home in Calgary and in Edmonton.
- Don't feel a lack of Jewishness in Edmonton, but we know that there is a larger world out there.
- We punch above our weight with the resources we have.
- Our population is shrinking. This is the number one issue.
- Growth is being achieved by immigration, not by birth.
- If you want to foster growth or keep people here, you have to have something to attract them.
- You need to talk to the people who left Edmonton and ask them why they left.
- Although a very small Jewish community, there is something happening here every week if you want to take part in it.
- Out of 5,400 people, very few are involved.

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?

- I have always believed in a thriving JCC.
- Edmonton is unlike many cities where there is a JCC at the heart of the community with a whole range of activities.
- There's lots to do. I need to find it in myself to be more engaged. I can go to a different program every week of the year. Not a lack of activity, opportunity or facilities.
- I would like to see greater educational opportunities for adults, e.g. the Melton programme – a community-wide advanced adult education program. Need more opportunities to engage intellectually.
- I would like more cultural programming, not just Israeli dance.
- This isn't our grandfather's world anymore. People aren't sending their kids to Talmud Torah or are not very involved because it's 2014, not 1901.
- With all the things grabbing our attention, it is too overwhelming. We want to be out there, and we are. We are a victim of our own success.
- Everything is very dispersed right now, and it can be. We can continue to rent facilities.
- If we have the ability to centralize activities, it would make a difference.
- We don't have anti-Semitism or Israeli wars to galvanize us, we are too disjointed and don't cooperate.
- We need people, not buildings; we need coordination and cooperation.

4. What value might there be in having a central gathering place for the Jewish community and what purposes might it serve

- It's not the place that's important. When we did videos for the Talmud Torah reunion, we saw what they did in the past with little resources. We should be doing stuff that's interesting to attract people.
- We are divided by age, by religiosity, and by geography. Half the community lives in the west end, the other half downtown. We are bi-polar and need two locations: one at the Beth Shalom-Beit Horim, for offices and senior's services, one in the West End at the Talmud Torah, perhaps an addition, for family programming.
- There is something galvanizing in a community when you have a big project. Communities need to do things to revitalize themselves. The journey is as important as the destination.
- We need a central facility. There needs to be a focal point, a place. Now we are all over the map. There needs to be home base. Without it,

we have lost the opportunity for an identity. Don't know if it's a series of offices, meeting rooms, and other types of facilities.

- There seems to be a divide. Under 50s believe there should be a JCC. 50 and up ask, financially speaking, is it worthwhile?
- We need this place not to be at a synagogue, it is too threatening. There should be a neutral location.
- What is success: what will create a vibrant Jewish community? If people feel that a JCC will enhance their Jewish lives, then we need it.
- I don't feel that we can build a recreational centre. That wouldn't be the best use for our resources.
- Plant a tree – why? For 70 years down the road. If we want continuity, we plan for the future, even if we are above 50. We are better able to do it than the younger generation.
- It's people, not bricks and mortar that are very important for engaging. Just because we have a brick and mortar facility doesn't mean people will flock to it. No matter what we do, people will be opposed.
- There is so much baggage with the old building, because it was the wrong building.
- Has to be sustainable.
- Should be similar to the offices we have now, would have a number of multi-purposes spaces including a theatre, smaller rooms.
- If it were by the Talmud Torah, it would have a kosher kitchen, which we need.
- Need a lounge, which could be a hang-out place.
- The challenge with existing facilities, like synagogues, is they have been purpose-built and they are not very adaptable. They are not suitable for everything we want to do.
- To relax and be sociable requires the proper environment. If we are all living into our 90s, we need to provide for that.
- Historically, there has been a JCC facility going back decades. Beth Shalom was the first JCC. When the Talmud Torah added a gym and a lounge area that functioned as the JCC. It served double duty. Then the JCC came along and fulfilled those needs. We have a continuous history of having somewhere for people to go.
- What's behind us just doesn't matter anymore. We have to do things outside of bricks and mortar. We have moved into a virtual mode.
- We need a central address. I still worry about spending the money on the edifice. We need people.
- We could use a mikvah here because there are 5 but only Orthodox people are allowed to use them.
- In the end, the JCC was only sustained by non-Jewish users. Perhaps we should make it something that others could utilize.
- Hard to think what we will need 20 or 30 years from now.

- Maybe we should use that money for something else entirely. Maybe a Shaliach from Israel?