

Ambassador Reporting Summary

Date: December 17, 2013

Number of attendees: 10

Number born and raised in Edmonton: 1 and one other that moved to Edmonton when he was 4.5 years old

Number who moved to Edmonton: 9

Average length of time in the City: 15.45 years

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

☑ Born in Edmonton. Lived abroad for 7 years. 37 years in Edmonton.

☑ Opportunity. Left Quebec and checked out Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton and liked Edmonton best because of the warmth of the Community and at time in 1982, there was a vibrant JCC. 31 years.

☑ For a better quality of life. 12 years.

☑ University/Employment. 16 years.

☑ Love. "Followed my Bereshit to Edmonton." 12 years.

☑ Born in Montreal but moved to Edmonton at young age. 26 years.

☑ Employment. 4.5 years.

☑ Employment and "Happy Wife, Happy Life". 4.5 years.

☑ Also from Montreal and wife has connections/family in Edmonton. 6 months.

☑ University. 22 years.

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

☑ Too much of a focus on religious and not enough focus on Jewish and Israelis cultural events.

☑ Foundation of a Community is the Shul, School, and Community Centre. Those are three things that you need. Not overly committed because lack the time, nor overly religious but attend the Orthodox Shul because that is what I was used to in Israel. Community seems divided between the 3 Shuls and if one isn't religious there isn't a place for them. There needs to be a place for non-religious and for non-religious events such as Yom Haatzmaut and Yom HaZicharon. My Israelis identity is much stronger than my Jewish identity because I grew up in Israel. Born there and lived there. People should be more involved and it's important to be a member of a Shul. What will be the Jewish future of my children in 5-10 years once they finish Talmud Torah? Concerned about this.

☑ Echo similar comments. When I first came to Edmonton everything seemed to be segregated. Remember one year that there were 7 Purim parties. At first when I arrived everybody seemed to care just about their clique and as a community I thought we lacked heart, even when we had the JCC. As we got more involved in the Community and volunteered this changed and we felt the connection, and there is a lot of outreach and communication in Edmonton. Those that are

affiliated and involved probably don't feel the segregation nearly as much as those who are not involved.

☒ 5 years ago when I was 26 the situation was dismal for young adult programming. I got involved and it was good for a few years but we stopped and feel that there is nothing. One has to get involved and be a forefront and do it. Orthodox put on events. Federation only does 3 – 4 events. I feel that there is a real lack of leadership.

☒ People go to Shul for meaning and Judaism and you must want to do it. It's an uphill battle to get people motivated. I.e. calling for Yom Haatzmaut and not getting a good response. Israel is the Jewish's peoples safety net and will protect Jews everywhere in the world. Commitment isn't here. Even in Winnipeg where they have a large JCC, the community isn't as committed as it should be. Edmonton doesn't need a Rade (Winnipeg) type Centre but we need something.

☒ People are frustrated. They are different Shuls, different organizations. Everyone wants to push their organizations identity. We get pulled in different directions and feel like we go around in circles. I believe we need strong leadership that will connect us. Whether you're religious or secular we need a place that welcomes all. Similar idea to Jewish Fraternity for University students. We need to be united and need consistent effort on the part of Federation leadership to communicate because the start/stop/start/stop approach doesn't keep us motivated.

☒ Lack of support and communication. Things happen and there is a poor turn out because people don't know about it. There needs to be more support for the Talmud Torah School. Just UJA support for the school isn't enough.

☒ We need to consider that we are very different people with a wide variety of tastes and interests. I.e. Take Jewish Film Festival some complain if there is Hebrew films, or Holocaust movies or not enough comedies etc. We are a very, very, small group but we have very different tastes and we need ONE thing that will bring us together. Jewish identity is key but maybe we need an approach that consists of a mosaic of options to cater to our varied tastes and interests. We need better communication.

☒ My experience in the last five years that I've been in Edmonton is positive. I've felt more Jewish in Edmonton than I did in a much bigger community like Toronto. Edmonton's community is much more welcoming and warm than T.O. I go to Jewish events because 1) Committed to the Jewish community and it's important to attend as much as possible to support the community and 2) If the programming is interesting and the content is good, there is a much better chance that I'll attend. We are all busy and there are always choices of where we can spend our time and not enough of it to do everything, so we need to focus on strong programming that will appeal to the majority of the community.

☒ Attendance at events could always be better. Question is how do we improve it? Geography is important and if we have a home/centre that is close to the majority of the community that will certainly help. We used to play soccer at T.T. once per week, which was great but it's difficult at the school with EPSB rules and the expense. BBYO kids used to play basketball at JCC but that is no longer possible. I'm on BBYO parent board and it's a big issue not having a place to go. Of course the Federation supports Hillel and BBYO and it would be great if T.T. could offer the gym easily and readily for floor hockey and basketball but I know that there are challenges with EPSB policy.

☒ With respect to leadership, I would say that leadership is us. We are the community and being a small one, every individual counts that much more and we should get involved and that leadership is really up to all of us.

☒ Community is critical of Judaism from both a cultural and religious perspective. I'm actually quite happy. My kids attend a Jewish school, we belong and regularly attend a Synagogue. I would love to see a JCC where I can go to interact with people that attend different Shuls or that are not affiliated. It would be excellent to interact with those Jews that generally travel in different Jewish circles than I do.

☒ Kids in T.T. so I do have a link but without a JCC I see a lack of fraternity and gathering in the Community. So today we are worse off because we don't have a JCC.

☒ We are a small community but our participation rate is much higher than in T.O. or Montreal. If we had 500 people to Israel Independence Day celebrations last year that is about 10% of the Community. In other larger communities you would be lucky if you were to get 2-3% of the community out to an event. We do require a Centre that will be a focal point for the Community. Suggest that we need to emphasize two things if we want the Community to improve and grow. 1) Look at Children and 2) Immigration. When we were looking at Vancouver, Calgary or Edmonton, we were quite impressed with Edmonton's JCC. Job prospects are not good in Ont. Or Quebec and we should be actively recruiting to bring Jewish families to Edmonton. Edmonton is a wonderful place to work, live and raise a family. A JCC can be the address and the face of the Community where new comers or potential new comers come to check out the larger Jewish Edmonton community. Getting back to number 1 we need to do a better job promoting Talmud Torah and getting the school's enrollment up. Menorah Academy is fine and choice is good but would prefer to see more kids at T.T. We really need to get the numbers up and reach the unaffiliated, which might be about 40-50% of the Jewish population that doesn't belong to Beth Israel, Beth Shalom or attend Chabad/Kollel.

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?

☒ We need a physical building that could host non-religious cultural events. An auditorium would be excellent.

☒ Yes a place for all Jews with Jews that has a Jewish atmosphere and that contains a gym, dance studio and recreational facilities. The challenge I see is that the community cannot reach a decision.

☒ Offer what would bring us together socially. Want to be close to the centre, 3-5 minute drive down the street. With young children I, along with girlfriends feel that we are traveling all over the City and it would be better if everything was in one area. The challenges are lack of fresh ideas, organization, communication and the main barrier might be a lack of willingness to take a risk and actually build a centre.

☒ If you build a Centre, have to pull together. Don't push as you'll go into different directions. Don't believe we need another Jamie Platz in West End and that perhaps members of JCC can get a discount from Platz? Do we need a gym? Probably not if we build next to Talmud Torah. Would like to see an auditorium. The challenge will be to get people on the same page and have the same unified mission. We want people to get on board but many or some just won't care and will have a "c'est la vie" attitude.

- ☑ Main barrier in my opinion is that we might not have the will and leadership to make it happen.
- ☑ Leadership is us. We are it. I'm pushing 60 and still interested in seeing what's best for the community. Titles don't motivate people. Getting involved, participation, being active and leading by example is what leadership is about.
- ☑ Leadership is also about supporting individuals. I.e. A few years ago in the wintertime we had the Israelis sing a along and movie night at the JCC but after a while we didn't get the support we needed.
- ☑ We need something to bring us together. Shuls are important but they tend to also fracture us.
- ☑ Would like to see a central focal point for the Community. Challenge will be what to build and how to program it.
- ☑ It'll be a big challenge getting everyone committed and it could take 3-4 years to build.
- ☑ We need a place for "One Stop Shop". Jews like to do their own thing with respect to everything but if we had a place that offered most things under one roof, we'd be way better off. Would like to see an indoor playground, gym, multi-purpose room. It should have a kitchen or eating spot because we also like to socialize around food. Could lead to folks meeting their soul mates. Barrier is having the right leadership to rally the community to ensure that we are on the same page and can leverage off of each other. Federation has some major donors that have their own agenda. Everyone needs to come together so that we have a community wide and unified agenda.
- ☑ Would like to see a place that brings people together. I also echo, "One Stop Shop". I'd love to see an Aroma Coffee Shop in the new centre. There are now 8 in Toronto and Starbuck's will be in trouble. Would also like to see an after school program. We need a place that meets are daily needs and wishes.
- ☑ I see more opportunities than barriers. It is up to us make sure our voices are heard. Talmud Torah seems the logical location but I know there are some logistical challenges there.
- ☑ A new JCC would go a long way to fulfilling my aspirations for an enriched Jewish Life. There are two barriers that I see 1) History. There are a lot of lessons to be learned from the past, but I also worry that this process could be hijacked by what has gone on before. I believe that we need a fresh start and fresh approach. 2) Money. Nobody has said this and if we are to build a new centre it's going to cost money and how much are willing to put into it. We really need to look inside of ourselves individually to see how much we are willing to invest into a new Centre.

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

- ☑ A coffee shop or Aroma would be ideal. JCC should cater to young families and not just Jewish families but also to families in the West End. It should have an indoor playground and offer programing for toddlers such as music and dance classes. Need to think of ways of increasing traffic for both Jewish and non-Jewish families to ensure that it will generate enough revenue to cover operations. Would also like to see Bliss Baked Goods on the West End of the City.
- ☑ JCC should be separated from Federation. There are many areas of expertise from operations, maintenance and programing that may not be the Federation's strong suit that the new JCC Board should be in charge of.
- ☑ Would like to see an indoor playground. Also programing for all stages of life – toddlers, grade school, teenagers and adults.
- ☑ Whatever we do it needs to be properly thought out, developed really well and done right.

☒ We shouldn't limit ourselves and be too concerned with what happened in the past. For instance, Chabad of McGill is fundraising for a new \$3 Million centre on Campus. This is just for the University and not Chabad of Montreal. If they can raise \$3 Million we should be able to raise enough funds to build something of stature here in Edmonton. Having said this, history is a big thing. There is a perception that Federation is a closed shop and that decisions are sometimes bull dozed for the interest of a few influential stakeholders. This perception needs to change and we need a transparent and open decision making process regarding a new JCC. I'm very happy and optimistic about this ambassador program and believe that is a very worthwhile process for the federation and the community to embark upon.

☒ Yes, face to face meetings with a round table dialogue is very important.

☒ I like this format because good ideas outside of the JCC questions have come up and been discussed.

☒ It's been several years since there was a major capital campaign in the community and having a mortgage isn't necessarily a bad thing.

☒ Would like to see a Community Calendar of all Events prominently placed somewhere on the Webpage and that is easily accessible.