

Ambassador Reporting Summary

Date: March 4, 2014

Number of attendees: 9

Number born and raised in Edmonton: 0

Number who moved to Edmonton: 9

Average length of time in the City: 8.72 years

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

- Work, 10 years
- Work, 1.5 years
- School, Kollel, Community, 3 years
- Spread & teach Judaism, 9 years
- Ditto, 9 years
- To join the army of Hashem, 4 years
- Immigration, 23 years
- Work & opportunity, 9 years
- To be a Chabad emissary, 10 years

2. How do you find Jewish community life generally?

- Lots of potential but we are missing teenagers and need to reach out to the unaffiliated. Edmonton has lots of options to study and explore the Torah.
- Religious is buzzing and secular is quiet.
- Great. So many things going on in our community.
- Would like to see us being more cohesive. Would like to see stragglers getting involved.
- Meet a few people only once in a couple of years. Where are they the rest of the time?
- Need to reach people who physically live in the outskirts, St. Albert, Sherwood Park & south side.
- Per capita you could argue that we have the most going on, however, there are many we don't know about.
- JCC is more of a neutral place that brings everyone together provided it's kept to a Jewish standard.
- City has lots of potential but no real platform to meet Jews.
- You may run into 400 – 500 during High Holidays but then there is no contact. A neutral place would help.
- College kids need to connect.
- Super warm & friendly.
- A lot of people are stagnant at the level that they are at.
- Many people are proud to be Jewish but are complacent, & are not interested in doing more.
- Need to focus on kids & teens. Enhance programs like NCSY & others.
- This community is amazing. It's incredibly vibrant.
- I believe that there is a pretty high rate of affiliation, & a high rate of activity, which is truly amazing but we need to do a whole lot more. We have to be the best that we can be.

- Those that are active have to do more.

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 outreach & something for those young adults in the 22 – 35 age range.
- Unfortunately many people feel that they don't need to be involved.
- One challenge is that there are different groups in Judaism & different groups in Edmonton. We need to explain to others that we have more in common than we think & need to reach out to these Jews to bring them out to functions, parties & activities in a non-threatening manner & environment.
- We need a centre & a kosher meat restaurant that can provide opportunities for social interaction & outreach.
- There we can invite folks to our homes without pressure.
- All Jewish under same G-D.
- The challenges & barriers is in us.
- Who will run the programs & what will the offering be?
- Whatever is built needs to be very inviting & engages Jews of all affiliations.
- Challenge is bring in the unaffiliated & we need strong leadership.
- A central database would be very helpful.
- T.T. phone book is good but it's for 3 years & is pretty outdated after the first year.
- With a good database we could match up new comers with more established & suitable families, & they could be mentored.
- Need opportunities to engage in a non-threatening environment like during a game of basketball that also supports exercise & a healthy lifestyle. Saturday night games at Menorah never really took off, however, a JCC men's basketball night would be a perfect place to meet & get some exercise.
- A non-threatening place with leisure activities or opportunity to play basketball or floor hockey is very important.
- There is a stigma between Synagogues & unfortunately Judaism has become too Synagogue based.
- Judaism is a way of life. It should be about living & praying & not about paying.
- Would like to see more enhancement of Jewish identity in a non-threatening environment.
- Neutrality is key.
- There are several barriers/challenges – Everyone has their own ideas, lack of consensus, & money.
- Rabbis are very approachable & "normal".
- A JCC would serve to give exposure to the broader community & a way to pull in those that don't have a connection.
- Could run programming on neutral turf.
- One challenge is that many perceive the religious to be unapproachable.
- Another challenge is the lack of innate curiosity to explore Judaism.
- Need neutral ground as opposed to too many Shul based programming presently.
- Lack of kosher restaurants is a challenge to attracting religious families.

- There is a negative stereotype that being religious is too restrictive.
- Aspiration for me would be to see phenomenal education both secular & Jewish from Pre-K to High School, with 100% participation.
- Would love to see a vibrant community where all of the kids & the entire community is taking an active part in it.
- Want to see 1,000's of people at events & where all of the Shuls are operating at full capacity.
- Kosher stores like in larger communities.
- What we lack in numbers we make up for in quality.
- Also need a home for seniors.
- There are many barriers including – ignorance, our base animalistic instincts & personal issues.
- Communal barriers include – apathy, lack of leadership, & that sometimes Federation puts its interests above the community's best interest.

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

- Yes, great value in a neutral place that can unite the people & serve the needs of the community, & both our physical & spiritual goals.
- A place where all ages & affiliations feel comfortable, kippah or no Kippah, it doesn't matter.
- Kosher restaurant would be excellent.
- Outdoor space would be nice for say soccer or flag football.
- Great value especially if it's a physically attractive building with state of the art facilities & equipment. Will be attractive to a majority of the community.
- Location is very important & it needs to be close to where most of the Jews are located.
- Should be for the Jews. Issue at old JCC where I stopped advertising for Hebrew School because more non-Jews than Jews were enquiring.
- We very much need to think of our vision & goals & how these will be reflected in a physical building, if the community decides to build. How much will it cost to build? After it's built who will operate it, what will be the program offering, & how much will membership cost?
- We need a teen lounge.
- We shouldn't be a Jewish Jamie Platz.
- Are we going to learn from our mistakes? What is more important, bricks or education & activities? Maybe we don't need a building?
- An indoor playground would be excellent.
- How is the building going to cater to all of our Jewish youth?
- There should be a strong focus on enhancing Jewish identity.
- Federation communication pieces should also be in Hebrew & in Russian.
- Should have kosher facilities. If possible a banquet facility with kosher facilities for those that want to hold a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Wedding or Simcha but not associate or do it a Shul.
- Look at an auditorium for speakers & performances, Israelis artists & the dance group.
- Should have classrooms for all types of Jewish education, including Torah & Gemara classes.
- We don't need a swimming pool & maybe not even a gymnasium.
- If an indoor playground ensure that it has a Jewish flavour.