

# Report of the Regional Communities Task Force

July 2017



**CONNECT ME IN!**  
POWERED BY JEWISH FEDERATION



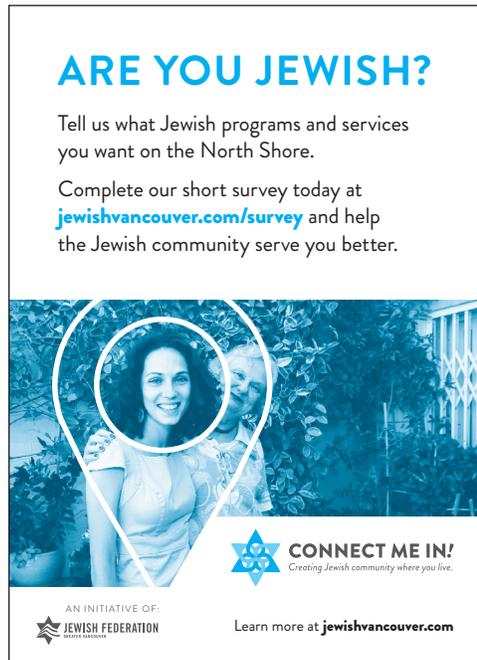
**ARE YOU JEWISH AND LIVE  
OUTSIDE OF VANCOUVER?  
WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

## Introduction

Up until the late 1960s, the Lower Mainland Jewish community was a small, relatively close-knit community centered in Vancouver along the Oak Street corridor. Over the past five decades, our population has not only grown significantly but has become more geographically dispersed. While the 2001 census indicated that there was a growing number of community members living in areas such as Burnaby, Coquitlam and Port Moody, the overall numbers were relatively low. By 2011, when the National Household survey was released, two trends were apparent. More families were making their homes in the Burquest and Surrey-White Rock areas; and there were a growing number of families settling in Maple Ridge, Abbotsford, Langley and Mission where there is no Jewish infrastructure. Further, while number of children and young families was growing in these communities, enrolment in supplementary schools programs offered through Burquest and White Rock-South Surrey Jewish community associations was dropping significantly.

## Regional Communities Task Force

In response to these issues, the Federation board approved the formation of a regional communities task force. The task force began its work in January 2016. One of the first priorities of the task force was to hear from people living outside Vancouver. Using the tag line: “**Connect Me In: Creating Jewish Community Where You Live**”, the task force designed an online survey and set a goal of 500 responses. A variety of methods were used to drive people to the online survey including Facebook ads, ads in local community newspapers, face to face conversations, emails to our partner agencies and articles in the various Federation communication vehicles. Examples of the Facebook and print ads that were used are illustrated below and left.



**ARE YOU JEWISH?**

Tell us what Jewish programs and services you want on the North Shore.

Complete our short survey today at [jewishvancouver.com/survey](http://jewishvancouver.com/survey) and help the Jewish community serve you better.



AN INITIATIVE OF:  
**JEWISH FEDERATION**  
OF VANCOUVER

Learn more at [jewishvancouver.com](http://jewishvancouver.com)

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Creating Jewish community where you live.

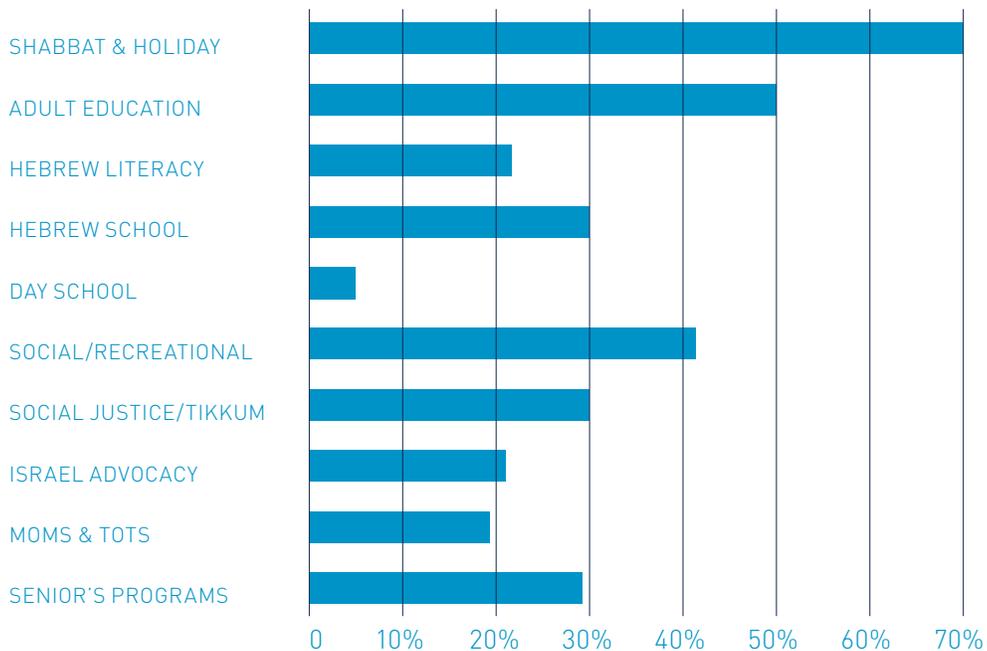


**CONNECT ME IN!**  
Creating Jewish community where you live.  
[jewishvancouver.com/survey](http://jewishvancouver.com/survey)

Over 400 completed surveys were received and summarized; 200 people provided contact information and 90 people were contacted. While the feedback was as diverse as the respondents who completed the surveys, there were some common themes:

- People want to connect with other Jews; in particular they want their kids to socialize with other Jewish kids
- Religious services are not a priority but people want to access a Rabbi if needed
- Most are familiar with the relevant regional community institutions but have chosen not to join
- Biggest barrier is distance, followed by not knowing anyone when they come to events
- Would like to see a central repository (web page for example) where they can find out about activities in their own community

And, as the graph below indicates, the majority of participants are seeking low barrier non-demanding family activities:



## Piloting Jewish programming

To address the barriers identified in the survey and facilitate Jewish programming in small emerging Jewish communities, the task force identified the need to organize some programs in each of these communities to “test the waters” before the task force report was completed.

Events were organized in Langley, Maple Ridge, Mission, Burnaby and Squamish under the “Connect Me In” brand. These have ranged from Shabbat pot luck dinners and Jewish holiday parties to adult education events and film nights. Participation has varied from event to event. Some participants have attended multiple events despite having to travel some distance, while other participants have only attended one event even though they expressed interest in upcoming events. See Appendix A for a listing of these activities.

Over the year, modifications were made to increase the impact of the programs. One change was to hold events in peoples’ homes or common spaces in townhouse developments rather than public venues. This created a greater sense of intimacy among the participants and also required the hosts to share the responsibility for the success of the program rather than leave it to Federation staff. Another change was to involve the shinshinim (Israel emissaries) in the children’s programming. Not only did this allow us to offer programming for different age groups at the same event, but it also enabled us to incorporate Israel engagement activities into the Jewish holiday programming.

The target audiences have primarily been families, in particular families with younger children. Most of the events have been organized around the Jewish holidays. However, one successful ongoing program is an adult education program in the North Burnaby area that is being presented by a series of Rabbis from across the denominational continuum. We were also fortunate to receive a Canada Summer Jobs grant to hire a summer student to work to organize summer programming with a Jewish twist in Langley, Maple Ridge and Abbotsford culminating with a family Shabbaton.



## Chanukah celebrations in Langley and Maple Ridge

### OBSERVATIONS:

This initiative has been underway for just over a year. There are more programming and connecting opportunities for Jews living in small, underserved parts of the Lower Mainland than there were a year ago. However, there is no one single strategy that is going to have any significant impact on meeting the needs of these community members. We need to take a comprehensive, customized and long term approach to delivering programs and services. These underserved areas are only going to be built through diverse programming and robust relationships that enable people to experience Jewish life on their own terms.

Community participation is changing and both Federation and the existing regional community organizations will have to modify their expectations and adopt creative ways to match this new reality. People live busy lives and have competing responsibilities. Joining organizations, serving on committees

or being proactive about accessing Jewish community programming is no longer the norm. If we are committed to strengthening Jewish connections and providing people with meaningful experiences, we are going to have to take the lead role in organizing and planning events and not expect the impetus to come through volunteers. Further, we need to come up with new criteria and not rely on membership numbers or participation levels as the primary metrics of success.

### **Through this process, we have come up with several observations:**

1. **Jews want to connect with other Jews;** they want their children and grandchildren to have Jewish friends, but they don't necessarily want nor are they willing to commit to the traditional Jewish education models. We need to explore more flexible models in terms of both scheduling and content and provide the necessary professional resources to help new education programs get off the ground.

2. **The existing regional community institutions need Federation's support to survive and thrive.**  
Each faces financial and leadership challenges and are impacted by changing attitudes toward Jewish community participation.
3. **There are a number of different micro communities that reside within these communities** (Israelis, Russians, Vancouver-based families who have moved to these geographic areas but who maintain strong connections with the Vancouver Jewish community; families and seniors who live in these communities and have little or no history with the Vancouver Jewish community and intermarried families). Each of these groups has very different needs and interests and very different expectations about the role of the organized Jewish community. Some of these groups work well together while other groups are more interested in having their own programming.
4. **People want non-denominational Shabbat and holiday programming.**  
Many of the current outreach initiatives have a denominational connection (The Bayit, Chabad, Burquest and White Rock). Many are seeking more secular cultural or educational opportunities.
5. **People are not interested in replicating the bricks and mortar communal structures** that have been the norm for Vancouver for many years. They are happy to participate in Jewish programming in public venues or in people's homes.
6. **People will attend programs outside their geographic area** if the activity is of interest to them and they feel welcomed. With the proper incentives and outreach, they would also attend programs in Vancouver on occasion.
7. **Ongoing volunteer commitment is difficult to achieve.** Despite expressing interest in helping to organize and plan events, it has been difficult to generate volunteer involvement. To be successful, our program development will have to be staff driven until the necessary volunteer leadership develops.
8. **An online presence is an essential outreach tool.** Seattle Federation's PAVE primarily connects with participants through emails, website postings and on social media. In a 30 day period, they determined that 40% of their PAVE web traffic was from returning users and 60% from new users.

## NEXT STEPS:

Our goal is to foster high-impact, low-barrier access points to Judaism and Jewish life and to create opportunities for people to develop and strengthen their connections to Jewish communal life so that they can be incorporated into their daily lives. To achieve this, we need to build relationships with individual community members and to support both grassroots and more formal structures. There also needs to be a variety of programs and activities that reflect the varied interests and the diversity of these communities.

### **Over the long term, we hope to be able to:**

1. **Expand the community engagement grant program** to facilitate informal program initiatives developed and delivered by grassroots groups without requiring them to go through unnecessary and cumbersome processes.
2. **Increase funding to the existing regional community organizations** through the allocations process to enable them to hire outreach staff to plan and deliver activities in their own communities with support from the Federation's Manager of Community Development.
3. **Sponsor and fund an annual regional communities' roundtable** for volunteers and lay leaders from these communities to meet, share ideas and benefit from professional development and best practices in other jurisdictions.
4. **Provide financial incentives to Vancouver-based organizations** that develop innovative ways to program in the regional communities or reduce barriers to people from these communities accessing their programs and services. East Side Jews is an excellent example of an initiative launched and supported by Temple Sholom to expand their programming reach.
5. **Explore the viability of creating an itinerant educator/adult educator** who can work with both existing regional community organizations and informal organizations to develop and deliver Jewish education programs in a variety of venues (homes, public schools, libraries, community centres) in various geographic areas.
6. **Build relationships with public officials, school districts and political representatives** to raise the visibility of the Jewish community in these areas and to identify potential grants or programs that these communities could benefit from.

## RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Shelley Ail

Marnie Goldberg

*Co-chairs: Regional Communities Task Force*

## Appendix A: Programming by location and participation numbers

### BURNABY- NEW-WEST:

- Pre-Hanukkah celebration, November 27<sup>th</sup> (40 people)
- Tu-B'Shvat Shabbat, February 10<sup>th</sup> (10 people)
- Connecting — First session for the Adult study group in Burnaby led by Rabbi Stephen Berger, Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 pm (10 people). Second session: Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 7:30pm led by Rabbi Yechiel Baitelman of Chabad Richmond. (14 people)

### COQUITLAM

With Burquest and the Alef in the Tri-Cities Group

- Sukkot Celebration with Burquest and Alef in the Tri-Cities, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 (about 50 people)
- Pre-teens and teens engagement program facilitated by the Shinshinim in Burquest — Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> (8 teens)
- Shabbat Dinner and service at Burquest with the shinshinim to offer Israeli songs and activities
- Purim party in partnership with Alef and the Burquest community. (150 – 200 people)
- Pre-teens and teens program around Israeli symbols and Israeli food – Led by ShinShinim on April 27<sup>th</sup> (8 teens)

### SOUTH SURREY WHITE ROCK

- Apple and Honey -meet and greet, September 25<sup>th</sup> (10 people)
- PJ-Pop Up Shabbat, Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 – 11:30
- Challah Bake, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from 7:30pm – 9:00pm (20 people)

### MISSION

- Shabbrunch in Mission — Kiddush and talk, Saturday, March 18<sup>th</sup>. This event targeted adults (6 people)

#### SQUAMISH:

- Pre-Hanukkah Celebration, November 6<sup>th</sup> (about 20 people)

#### LANGLEY

- Shabbat Dinner pot luck- November 11<sup>th</sup> (about 60 people)
- Hanukkah Celebration- December 11<sup>th</sup> (about 60 people)
- Tu-B'Shvat Celebration February 2<sup>nd</sup> (about 30 people)

#### MAPLE RIDGE

- Sukkot and focus group, October 23<sup>rd</sup> (40 people)
- Hanukkah Celebration, December 4<sup>th</sup> (t 40 people)
- Tu-B'Shvat Celebration, February 25<sup>th</sup> (25 people)
- Women's Middle East Jewish Celebration May 28<sup>th</sup> (10 people)