



# The Jewish Federation OF EDMONTON

100, 10220-156 St. Edmonton, AB T5P 2R1 (780) 487-0585 [www.jewishedmonton.org](http://www.jewishedmonton.org)

I visited with my friend and colleague, Gustavo Rymberg, the CEO of the Hamilton Jewish Federation, while I was travelling in Ontario last week. I've mentioned before the Jewish Federation of Edmonton is part of a Canada-wide network, and I enjoy the collegiality and cooperation of my counterparts across the country. Hamilton's strategic plan inspired me. They have incorporated their values and priorities at the forefront of all that they do and their strategic plan has created new opportunities for them to pursue. I look forward to sharing our direction with you at our annual general meeting on December 8. It's important for you to attend, because being informed of our Jewish Edmonton will help make a stronger and more engaged community. [Please register before December 8.](#)

Beyond our Canadian connections, we are also part of the Jewish Federations of North America. They have just awarded us a \$10,000 micro-grant for a special project called [Shine a Light on Antisemitism](#) that will take place over Chanukah, where we will engage our community in a mosaic art project that will culminate in a final piece to be displayed in a public setting. You can express how you feel about antisemitism through this art project. The overall goal is to raise awareness about antisemitism in Edmonton and beyond our city. We are very excited to roll this out and will have details coming to you soon.

Combatting antisemitism, hate and racism in all its forms is something we stand committed to and are vigilant about. Mayor Amarjeet Sohi announced he will act within 100 days to create a strategy to address racism and city council supported this by passing a motion during a meeting last week. If you followed the news this past weekend, you will have noted the COVID-19 vaccination protest rallies replete with Holocaust imagery or the antique stores profiting in the sale of Nazi memorabilia. The response to these events on Twitter was strong and because of [our tweets](#), City TV Edmonton News approached us for [comments](#). I am heartened that citizens who are not part of the Jewish community led the grassroots actions, but will speak up and speak out. Steve Shafir, president, and I have submitted a letter to the editor to the Edmonton Journal as a result, and you can read that at the end of this message.

You will note in our weekly that we have many events planned for the month ahead. The commemoration of Kristallnacht on Monday will be a virtual program, and our annual Remembrance Day ceremony at the cemetery will occur in a socially distanced manner. As we enter winter, I encourage you to register for our many programs and keep connected with one another. We remain Here for Good, and we appreciate every donation to UJA that supports all that we do.

Shabbat shalom

*D. Lewitt*

Stacey



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## **Re: Why are Muslim women in Edmonton being attacked? Details reveal a complicated history by Johnny Wakefield (October 28, 2021)**

We felt the need to respond to this article after reading it. Firstly, acts of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry are not acceptable in Edmonton, or elsewhere in Canada. We would like to express our allyship and solidarity with Muslim women. Women in Hijab should be able to walk the streets of Edmonton in safety and with dignity, and be able to practice their religion and culture without impunity. The increase of hate crimes and actions in Edmonton are a huge concern to us. We are pleased to see that the newly-elected city council is taking hate crimes seriously by making the issue a high priority on their agenda.

The Canadian Race Relations Report recently published *Race relations in Canada 2021: A survey of Canadian public opinion and experience*, which found that one in five Canadians reporting discrimination and mistreatment resulting from their race regularly or from time to time.

As members of the Jewish community, we understand the disproportionate experience of hate crimes by racialized communities. B'nai Brith Canada, a Jewish human rights organization, says it recorded 2,610 antisemitic incidents last year, the fifth consecutive record-setting year for reports of antisemitism in Canada. We encourage the reporting of hate crimes. At the same time, we are aware of too many unreported incidents of hate directed towards individuals wearing identifiable Jewish symbols such as a Star of David necklace or a *yarmulke*.

We are saddened that Mr. Wakefield's article was published on the same day that yet another anti-vaccine rally occurred in Edmonton where participants equated the measures to the horrors of Holocaust and evoking symbols that Jews were forced to wear as part of Nazi persecution. Also, on the same day that a local antique store was caught by an individual trying to profit from the sale of Nazi memorabilia. It also happened to be the anniversary of the massacre of 11 innocent worshippers at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. November is Holocaust Education Month in Canada and Jews around the world will be commemorating Kristallnacht on November 9. We take heart in the support our community has received in condemning the recent antisemitic events in Edmonton.

We remain hopeful that despite the increase in hate seen that Edmontonians will support each other. We will contribute positively towards a goal of raising awareness and combatting hate, racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism. We encourage all Edmontonians to continue speaking out. We cannot give into hate and we must never forget what hate can do and where it can lead us.

Steve Shafir, President, Jewish Federation of Edmonton

Stacey Leavit-Wright, CEO, Jewish Federation of Edmonton