

By the numbers, the Heritage Festival was a tremendous success again this year. With two dance groups gracing our pavilion, and 45 volunteers and Jewish Federation of Edmonton staff serving food 12 hours a day, we managed to welcome over 8,000 visitors! Thank you to those of you who came out to support this signature Israel advocacy event, unique among Jewish communities across Canada.

Figures are on my mind; we are identifying census tracts, areas of focus to get more detailed data as it pertains to our community from the latest Canadian census. While it will take some while to receive this information, these numbers have been highly anticipated, and I look forward to sharing them with you.

Now for the more somber numbers, those concerning hate crimes in Edmonton and across Canada, with the most recently published statistics for 2021. In Edmonton, religious driven hate crimes are up 264 percent. Across Canada, 14 percent of hate crimes targeted the Jewish communities, who account for one percent of the population. Hate motivated incidents are an occurrence that often goes unreported, whether people are afraid, desensitized or think it pointless. I encourage you to report anything you might see or experience, both to hate crimes and to our offices, as episodes may be part of a pattern that is being tracked, and it is important that we capture this data.

We continue to take security concerns seriously for our community, whether it be in liaising and advocating with our Edmonton Police Service and government officials for security matters and funding, hiring guards for our events and programs, offsetting the costs of high holiday off-duty police for our synagogues, or providing back to school and back to shul training.

The Federation mobilizes and develops resources. We strengthen relationships for the betterment of our community, locally and abroad. Let Tisha B' Av this weekend be a reminder, while we mourn the destruction of the temple(s) and the diaspora that followed, that when something occurs in Israel, we feel the impact here in Edmonton. When we strengthen Jewish Edmonton, we also strengthen Israel. As some of you will already know, the Israel Defense Forces has launched a special operation targeting key Islamic Jihad sites and leadership in Gaza, and we are tracking this development closely.

Next week I will be on a few days of holiday just as we will welcome Tu B' Av, the holiday of love. Recognition of this ancient day has been growing among secular Israelis. Whether you celebrate in full out adoration or use this chance to show your care for a fellow community member, I wish you all a Shabbat Shalom and a moment of true rest as we continue to enjoy the summer months.

Shabbat Shalom,

*S. Lewitt*

Stacey