



From the Desk of the Ceo,

The Shabbat message [last week](#) experienced a technology glitch. Perhaps the problem was for the better, as I had not yet heard about the tragedy unfolding over Lag Baomer in Mount Meron, close to our partner region in Israel. Our deepest sympathies go out to all the families mourning and we wish a refuah shlema to the injured.

While you can read the message from our website, I want to repeat two points. First, by now you should have received an invitation to participate in the 2021 Census in the mail. The Government of Canada uses census information to plan community programs and services, and we rely on this demographic data as well. The last census underreported Jewish Canadians by a large margin. That's why we are urging you to complete it right away, and to count yourself as "Jewish", if that's how you identify.

If it is important to you to be counted as Jewish, then write "Jewish" when responding to question 23, question 30, or both. On question 23, which pertains to ethnicity, you can include multiple answers, for example, "Russian" and "Jewish" or "Moroccan" and "Jewish." After all, our community is home to people with diverse backgrounds and who hail from around the world.

It is important for Jewish Canadians to be recognized by the Government of Canada as a thriving, growing, and engaged community. To that end, my second point was to urge you to participate in another survey this month, to ensure a thriving and engaged Jewish Edmonton. We will be launching our Strategic Planning and we want to hear from you. Surveys will be emailed and shared on social media after Shavuot. Help us set our priorities for the next 3-5 years and make sure that your voice is heard.

This has been a tough week in Alberta; and I know it is hard to muster the energy for planning in uncertain times. As this pandemic drags on, we can take hope in the vaccines now being rolled out on a wider scale and continue to enjoy virtual programming. Hundreds of you have joined us for the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival and the curated speakers that have enhanced the experience. For those who have donated to the covid relief fund, we thank you. We have begun to help families make rent, urgent bill payments, and ensured groceries are on the table. If you could use help right now, funds can still be accessed by contacting Jewish Family Services. The process is simple and confidential. The next stage of support for community agencies will be rolled out soon as we are now determining with them where further relief will be beneficial to physical safety and mental health.

The virtual film festival could not have come at a better time. Once you are staying in this weekend, enjoy our shorts with your children. Attend the Camp BB Gather Town event Saturday night, which we were delighted to support with the inclusion of Cinema Rex. On Sunday we are airing 'Kiss Me Kosher' an adorable rom-com about an LGBTQ couple and the antics of their families. Come here the Earl Parker award winners tell us about their adventures in film making during the pandemic and kvell with the community that we were able to support upcoming, innovative Jewish Canadian filmmakers with this award. It is not too late to register.

Stay safe and Shabbat Shalom.

*D. Lewitt*