



2008 Planning Council Report

May 2008

Planning Council Report

Introduction

In August 2007, the Board of Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver selected three key priorities to guide the community planning process:

- Serving vulnerable populations;
- Jewish education and identity; and
- Engaging the next generation.

Five population groups: seniors, youth, adults with disabilities, families living on limited incomes and new immigrants were identified as falling within the serving vulnerable populations priority.

To begin the community planning process, a planning think tank was held in late October, using the three priorities as the overarching framework for discussion. Participants attending this think tank represented community professionals, lay leadership and content experts. While all three priorities were on the agenda, the most focused discussion was on serving vulnerable populations. To obtain further input on the Jewish Education and Identity priority, two smaller think tanks were held; one on formal and informal outreach activities and the other on formal and informal education.

In addition to the planning think tanks, two additional planning processes are currently underway: a needs assessment of Jewish adults with mental health issues, and a community coordination committee on youth at risk. The results of these initiatives will further inform the overall community planning process. Additionally, Federation will host two more think tanks to identify community priorities in the area of serving new immigrants and engaging the next generation.

This report contains a summary of the community priorities as identified by participants attending each of three think tanks, along with additional recommendations in the areas of youth at risk and engaging the next generation.

Appendix 1 is a table showing the availability and gaps in services across the region for Jewish seniors, families, youth and adults with disabilities.

Summary of Planning Council Recommendations:

Serving Vulnerable Populations

1. Fund satellite counselling and support services to support seniors, families and adults with disabilities living in the regional communities.
2. Expand programs and outreach services designed to support adults with disabilities living in the community.
3. Build coalitions and form partnerships with other organizations and not for profit organizations outside the Jewish community, to provide a range of affordable housing options for families and seniors.
4. Explore the viability of creating a rental subsidy fund for families and individuals who are not eligible for the provincial program.
5. Facilitate collaborative planning across the community to leverage opportunities for new programs and shared resources.
6. Fund a youth outreach position to support and intervene with youth engaged in at risk behaviour.
7. Explore the viability of creating a 24/7 crisis line for youth and their families in immediate need, in partnership with existing agencies in the general community.

Jewish Education and Identity

1. Create a Jewish Education Council through Federation to facilitate high level community planning and undertake research to provide the day and supplementary schools with the information and resources they need to maintain and attract students and meet the educational expectations of parents and the community at large.
2. Expand the range of marketing strategies to promote formal and informal Jewish education opportunities in the Greater Vancouver area.
3. Facilitate opportunities for organizations interested in developing and delivering family education programs to network, access resources and work together to increase the number of family education opportunities available.

4. Enhance the recruitment strategies available to the day schools to meet their need for quality educators and facilitate ways for principals to leverage opportunities for access to new graduates.
5. Explore ways to increase the number of childcare and early childhood education spaces available in the community.
6. Increase funding available for Jewish educational institutions and programs through a) a Community Capital Campaign (similar to Toronto & Montreal) or b) supplemental giving opportunities. To be effective, it will be necessary to cultivate “champions” of Jewish education within Federation leadership. Increase funding for camperships and Israel programs scholarships.
7. Establish a funding envelope to support organizations that are reaching out and engaging the unaffiliated including youth, families and seniors not currently connected.
8. Fund a pilot project in partnership with organizations such as Shalom BC, JCC, or JFSA to reach out to new parents with Jewish resources for young children based on the PJ Library or other “new baby gift basket” programs operating out of the US.
9. Build on the interest of many youth and young families in promoting environmental causes by providing funding to organizations pursuing a “green agenda”. Explore ways to provide educational opportunities for organizations to learn how to promote a healthy environment or to consult on environmental issues for community events.
10. Provide organizational, governance and fundraising support to help smaller agencies become financially and organizationally self sustaining.
11. Offer or sponsor workshops on successful outreach strategies to mainstream Jewish communal organizations committed to expanding their membership.
12. Explore different ways to market the work of Federation and the goals of the annual campaign with the unaffiliated and enhance the broader community’s awareness of the campaign and how the funds raised benefit the community.

Engaging the Next Generation

1. Move forward with implementation of a new leadership development program informed by the feedback from past participants.

2. Provide support for programs such as the Young Jewish Urbanites that can connect young people to the community through a variety of social and educational avenues.
3. Build a network among all organizations involved in delivering programs for this population to collaborate on program development and share resources.
4. Create a menu of philanthropic opportunities in consultation with a group of young leaders from organizations across the community.
5. Explore the viability of creating a social networking site targeted toward youth and young adults.

Serving Vulnerable Populations

A. Seniors

Current Situation:

According to the UIA 2001 census analysis, the Lower Mainland's elderly Jewish population is projected to rise dramatically by 2021 as the baby boomers begin swelling the ranks of the elderly population. By the 2021, the number of Jewish elderly will increase two and a half times, which will have important ramifications for service planning and implementation, and will challenge local community resources which are mostly found in Vancouver. Richmond, which has the second highest concentration of seniors in the Lower Mainland, has no affordable housing or assisted living units with a Jewish orientation and has few counselling, home support or adult care services.

Unmet Needs:

Home Support and Housing Needs

- The growing needs of seniors for assisted living, home care, and long-term care throughout the Greater Vancouver area
- Retaining home support workers in a robust economy with non-competitive pay rates.
- The lack of supportive housing alternatives for middle income seniors
- The growing number of seniors being placed in supportive or assisted living institutions with no Jewish content or connection to the community

- More frail elderly seniors requiring comprehensive and complex support

Aging in Place

- Growing needs of seniors who reside outside of the Vancouver area for housing, social interaction and home care services
- More diverse senior citizen population in relation to socio-economic status, culture and connection to the Jewish community

Community Priorities:

Home Support and Housing Issues

- Alternative models of housing for middle income seniors
- More subsidized units of assisted living for Jewish seniors residing in Vancouver
- Subsidized and assisted living for Jewish seniors living in Richmond
- Expanded home care programs to enable seniors to age in place

Aging in Place

- Support programs for the frail elderly living in the regional communities
- Satellite counselling programs for seniors living in the regional communities

B. Families

Current Situation

According to Human Resources Development Canada, Applied Research Strategic Policy Branch, single parent families are amongst the most vulnerable members of Canadian society. No group, except for the disabled, is at greater risk of poverty and has a higher rate of welfare participation. Reasons for this include: low wages, lower labour force participation and greater welfare participation. With stagnant wages, lone mothers are unable to keep up with the high cost of living. Lone parents who work part-time in order to raise their children struggle with a low income. Those who do not work must rely on social benefits, such as The Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), the National Child Benefit (NCB), and the BC Family Bonus, which often only cover basic necessities.

While the economy in BC has been strong for the past two years and income assistance rates were raised this past year, many lone parent families do not earn enough to rise above the poverty line. According to JFSA, most of their clients receiving financial

support through the basic resources fund are those who fall into the category of working poor. The majority of their income is spent on rent, food, and utilities with little left over for transportation, clothes, and personal care items such as haircuts, health care expenditures, recreation activities, and involvement in Jewish communal life.

According to the UIA 2001 Census Analysis:

The level of poverty among those residing in single parent households is 27.2%; with a higher incidence of poverty among those living in female single parent families (32%), than among those living in male single parent households (8.9%)

Of Jewish families in the Lower Mainland, 7.7% are headed by mothers who are raising 45.2% of the community's poor children. Based on 2001 census data, in real numbers, there are 485 individuals residing in female single parent families and 35 residing in male single parent families.

Among the most vulnerable are children under 15 years of age who live with their mothers. Almost half (43.2%) or 190 of these children live under the poverty line. Many single mothers are in particularly difficult circumstances as they struggle to cope with the responsibilities of child rearing and providing for their household.

Unmet needs

Affordable housing is a key component in maintaining the economic security, safety, health, and dignity of members of the Jewish community. Availability and access to affordable housing in the Lower Mainland is a top priority for all populations: seniors, families, young adults, mature adults, and new immigrants. Affordable housing has been identified as the most significant social issue in the Lower Mainland by numerous studies including the 2007 Vancouver Foundation "Vital Signs" community survey.

Two years ago, the Housing Development Director position was created and funded through allocations. As a result of this position, the community has been able to purchase, in partnership with BC Housing, an eleven unit apartment building in the Marpole area. While this is a significant advance for those who meet the selection criteria, it has had little impact on the situation for low income families.

There is a need to identify for alternative strategies to address the issue of affordable housing for low income families. Our community does not have the resource to build or purchase the required number of housing units. The Housing Development Director in collaboration with Tikvah Housing Society should begin to explore other solutions such as a designated fund to provide housing subsidies to families whose income exceeds \$34,000 and therefore are not eligible for the provincial program.

In addition to housing, other unmet needs that have been identified for moderate or low income families whether single or two parents are:

- Affordable childcare spaces in Vancouver and in regional communities
- A Jewish community “family place” where parents, grandparents, young children, and caregivers can gather and can access parenting skills, literacy programs, social interaction and support for their children under one roof in a “non” agency environment
- More dignified alternatives to food banks such as community kitchens and food purchase co-ops.

C. Adults with Disabilities

Current Situation

According to the World Health Organization, five of the 10 leading causes of disability are related to mental disorders. WHO predicts that in less than 20 years, depression will be the second leading cause of disability in the world; Health Canada estimates that in 1998, mental disorders were the third highest source of direct health care costs at \$4.7 billion.

In the recently released “Vital Signs” report produced by the Vancouver Foundation (2007), the top priority in the Health and Wellness category was access to treatment and services for adults with mental health issues. Other issues affecting adults with disabilities include workplace barriers, access to appropriate training programs, lack of appropriate treatment resources and homelessness. The City of Vancouver 2005 Homeless Action Plan estimates that one third of the homeless in Vancouver are mentally ill. Factors that contribute to housing instability for people with mental illness include: low income, weak or no social support network (no contact with their family), hospitalization, stigma and discrimination. Housing for people with mental illness is extremely inadequate and the wait lists are long.

Within the Vancouver Jewish community, there is one specialized residence, Yaffa House, which provides approximately 20 hours a week of supervision and recreational activities for the five residents. The Bagel Club, operated through the JCC offers social and recreational programming and JFSA offers some volunteer opportunities for adults with disabilities along with community awareness programs.

Unmet Needs

In addition to affordable housing designed for people with physical abilities and more supportive housing spaces for those unable to live independently, there are other unmet needs for adults with disabilities:

Employment

- Specialized employment and mentoring programs for adults with a range of disabilities
- Supportive employment opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities

Social Support and Counselling

- Outreach to adults with mental health issues to enable them to connect with the community and participate in activities
- Social and recreational opportunities for people with disabilities who reside in the regional communities
- Specialized counselling services for youth and adults with disabilities, and their families.

D. Youth at Risk

A separate planning process is underway in response to community concerns about youth-at-risk and youth engaging in “at risk” behaviour. This committee of professionals representing the schools, youth groups, JCC, JFSA, community Rabbis and Federation has identified several gaps in existing programs and services:

Support and Counselling Services

- A youth outreach worker, attached to JFSA, who works with parents, teachers, youth workers to identify and work with youth who are engaging in at-risk behaviours (substance abuse, eating disorders, fighting etc).
- A 24/7 crisis line for youth and others in the community who are in immediate need and require confidential support.
- A community based program embedded in Jewish values and traditions to work with youth with addiction problems and their families

Jewish Education & Identity

Two think tanks were held to address this priority; one think tank examined formal and informal education and the other focused on issues of identity and outreach.

A. Jewish Education

Representatives from the five days schools, the eight supplementary school programs and the JCC's adult education and early childhood education departments were invited to attend along with lay leaders and content experts. Thirteen people representing a cross section of formal and informal education opportunities participated in the discussion.

Current Situation

Day school enrolment continues to grow, with an increase of 8% over previous years. More than 800 students attend one of the five Jewish day schools. Federation funding for the day schools has increased and funding has also been made available for specific initiatives: an education psychologist whose time is shared across the five schools and consultation services for RJDS. School principals meet regularly with the Federation's Director of Jewish Education and administrators and educators are involved in the design and delivery of three professional development opportunities offered each year.

The supplementary schools have not experienced a consistent level of growth and some are struggling to maintain a viable level of enrolment. They offer a variety of approaches to Jewish culture, traditions and practices and a range of delivery formats to attract families. While the enrolment is relatively flat, these schools do reach primary and intermediate age children in 36 different schools in the Greater Vancouver area. Although they have received some program funding, there has not been an increase in their scholarship funding for over 11 years. All offer deep subsidies to ensure that every child who wants to attend has an opportunity to do so. Several play an important role in educating children growing up in intermarried families, and are frequently the gateway for children to attend Jewish camps, youth programs, or JCC youth activities. The supplementary schools face further challenges, in that they do not have the resources to attract the number of quality educators they require and Jewish learning and practices taught in the schools are frequently not reinforced at home.

The JCC is the only early childhood program, outside of the Jewish day schools, that offers a Jewish curriculum. There are few spaces available for families, and there is a long waitlist. Working families, particularly families who are working poor, describe

access to quality affordable childcare as one of the biggest impediments to improving their current situation.

Summer camps continue to be one of the powerful resources to maintain Jewish identity. Research has shown that those attending camp are 50% more likely to join a synagogue as an adult or choose to study in Israel during their university/college years.

Unmet Needs

- Lack of high level community planning for formal and informal education opportunities. This results in programs competing with each other and promoting themselves at the expense of other institutions in the community. There is a lack of effective marketing for students and educators, and the regional communities often lack the expertise, professional support, and financial resources to address their specific issues.
- Insufficient childcare and early childhood education spaces in programs offering Jewish content.
- Funding for supplementary education and camperships has not kept pace with the more complex needs of participants, shortage of staff resources, and rising costs.
- Lack of coordination and sharing of resources and best practices among the summer camp providers.
- TAG, the only post *bnai mitzvah* supplementary program, is struggling to maintain a viable enrollment and does not have sufficient funds to expand its program.

B. Jewish Identity

A broad array of organizations involved in outreach activities were invited to attend this think tank. The issue of what Jewish identity means in today's world was a primary focus of the discussion.

Current Situation

It is estimated that out of the approximately 23,000 Jews who live in the Greater Vancouver area, approximately 30% are affiliated with one or more Jewish organization. While, overall, our population is younger than Montreal and Winnipeg, the largest population group, according to the 2001 census, are individuals over the age of 65 years. Experience across North America has shown that it is this older population group that has the highest rate of affiliation and connection to the Jewish community. A recent

American study (Rosen, 2004) on “raising Jewish babies” found that even young Jewish families, who have every intention of remaining connected, often do not join Jewish communal organizations without active encouragement until their children are of kindergarten or primary school age

Few in our community identify themselves solely as Jewish. Most take on numerous identities and corresponding priorities. This trend toward multiple identities and interests significantly challenges the abilities of Jewish communal organizations to attract and retain membership. For many Jews, maintaining a ‘link in the chain’ of Jewish history is no longer a viable reason to become or stay involved.

A 2004 JESNA study on youth involvement estimated that among the 30% of affiliated families, only three out of ten youth were involved with activities connected to the Jewish community. Intermarriage is on the rise, and a yet to be published attitudinal survey, conducted with families currently on the Federation data base, shows a definite trend toward non-involvement in Jewish community activities and a shift away from believing that membership in a Jewish organization was a pre-requisite to maintaining Jewish traditions and practices.

Unmet Needs

- Programs to proactively reach out and engage those who do not feel connected to the community; new immigrants, interfaith families, individuals and families who have become alienated from the Jewish community.
- Programs to provide resources and/or encourage and welcome new parents or young families into the Jewish community who may not consider it a priority at this point in their lives to become involved in the Jewish communal.
- Support for smaller organizations particularly those in the regional communities, to increase their capacity to introduce new programs or undertake more creative ways to engage in outreach, because they lack the expertise or the funds.
- Programs to encourage and facilitate “in-reach activities” (programs that target young families or new parents who want to affiliate but tend to delay the decision until their children are older).

Engaging the Next Generation

Background:

Engaging the next generation is one of the three priorities set by the Board of Federation. Typically, the term “next generation” refers to the following groups:

- People between the ages of 19 and 40
- People “in between” university/college and being established community members
- Birthright alumni who have returned inspired and energized but need a point of entry to engage
- People building their careers and starting families
- Young Jews with little or no interest in federation or synagogue membership but have the resources and capacity to participate fully in Jewish life in Vancouver

Although, a think tank was not held to explicitly examine this priority, a number of activities have taken place to obtain the views and insights of this population including a focus group on branding and a survey of past participants of the 2005 & 2006 Leadership and Identity in A New Age Programs.

Current Situation

Young adults today are fiercely individualistic, and are media-savvy to a degree never seen before. They are comfortable with - and bombarded by - the abundance of technologies that exist today, from cell phones to beepers to the Internet. As a consequence, they are also extremely stressed in their everyday lives.

They strongly believe that they can make the world a better place - a perfect springboard for getting them involved as volunteers. Many young adults are open to finding several different ways to contribute, both within and outside the Jewish community, as opposed to their parents and grandparents who often focused primarily on the Jewish community. Jehuda Reinharz (2005) president of Brandeis University states that the “next generation of Jews who give to Jewish causes prefer to select the causes that most interest them rather than give to umbrella organizations...they want to be directly involved in the projects and issues they support.” Among the issues young people find compelling are: the environment, global poverty, violence prevention and animal rights.

In addition, we live in an era of increased mobility. Whereas previously, Jews tended to plant roots in a community and build the necessary communal organizations, today individuals and families tend to move around more and do not have the same long-term local communal ties as before. In the Lower Mainland, housing prices have forced many young people and families to move away from the centre of Jewish communal life and consequently become involved in non-Jewish activities and organizations.

The philanthropic and volunteerism landscapes are changing. Donors and lay leaders in years past were moved by formative events such as the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel, the Six Day War, and the plight of Soviet Jewry are being replaced by a generation of younger givers. But young Jews are not necessarily motivated by the same issues as their parents and grandparents. Further, older Jews have been more willing to trust large institutions with their philanthropic dollars. Younger donors often want to be engaged in a more hands-on way than their parents have or to be involved in a time or project specific activities rather than long term involvement.

Federations across North America are exploring ways to engage this population. Examples of some of the many initiatives that are being undertaken include:

- Creating multiple entry points for young people to engage with the Jewish community
- Creating a social networking site specifically for this age group
- Promoting non-traditional arts and cultural opportunities
- Convening networking opportunities based on career and personal interests
- Providing high level and innovative leadership development opportunities
- Creating specific philanthropic opportunities based on social action issues such as affordable housing, poverty reduction, environment and global hunger

Locally, programs such as Young Jewish Urbanites offered through Hillel have demonstrated success in reaching out to students, recent graduates and other young Jews between the ages of 22 and 30 who are seeking social, educational and business networking opportunities with other Jews. As well, a recent survey of past participants of the Leadership Development program indicated that leadership development opportunities that were “focused, skills based and time limited” with opportunities to network were most desirable.