

HILLEL BC ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT 2020-21

YEAR ENDING
AUGUST 31, 2021





**A YEAR OF
LEARNING,
VIRTUAL
CONNECTIONS
AND LOTS
OF FOOD!**

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WHO WE ARE

Hillel BC promotes Jewish life on campus and beyond, providing a warm, welcoming environment where students in BC are able to grow religiously, culturally, socially and ethically. We enable young Jewish adults to explore their Jewish identity and relationship with Israel in a safe, pluralistic and inclusive community. Our programs and events on multiple campuses across BC reflect the diverse interests and needs of our members, build valuable leadership skills, and help to create a long-term impact in the Jewish community and beyond.

OUR MISSION

Enriching the lives of Jewish students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world.

OUR VISION

We envision a world where every student is inspired to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning, and Israel.

HILLEL BC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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OUR STAFF

TEAM: JUNE 2020 - MAY 2021

Rob Philipp, *Executive Director*

Rabbi Philip Bregman, *Chaplain*

Ohad Gavrieli, *Director of Operations, Administration & Finance*

Lindsay Kerr, *Director of Student Life*

Tanya Mordkovich, *Program Coordinator*

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TEAM: JULY 2021 ONWARD

Rob Philipp, *Executive Director*

Ohad Gavrieli, *Assistant Executive Director*

Lindsay Kerr, *Director of Student Life*

Rabbi Kylynn Cohen, *Senior Jewish Educator*

Gilad Cohen, *Lead Advocacy Professional*

Zoe Mandell, *Lead Campus Professional (Emerging Campuses)*

Abigail Schmidt-Brown, *Lead Campus Professional (UVic)*

Einat Livni, *Springboard Innovation Fellow (UBC)*



INTRODUCTION

Challenging

Unprecedented

Isolating

These are the words one could use to describe the 2020-21 school year, experienced entirely under the cloud of a global pandemic. Despite these extraordinary circumstances, Hillel BC has remained true to its mission, and we have adapted our programs so that we can continue to be the backbone of Jewish campus life for our students.

Many students struggled to cope with a reality where all their classes were online; they interacted with their classmates exclusively through video calls. For this reason, this year our programs focused on creating a sense of community in whatever way possible. Some examples of creative community building include eating online together, meeting to play online games as a group, and meeting for socially distant coffees whenever restrictions allowed.

Making sure students remain connected to their Jewish identity and community is our core mandate, and we will continue to work for our students, no matter the circumstance.

We want to thank our wonderful staff who provided continuity, experience, and creativity in programming and student support during this unprecedented year on so many fronts.

And of course, we thank you, our supporters and donors within our community. We could not do what we do without you!



Rob Philipp, CPA, CA
Executive Director



Gordon Brandt
President of the Board





JEWISH IDENTITY

For many students, cultivating a strong and resilient Jewish Identity during their years on campus can be a major determinant for their involvement in Jewish communal life following graduation.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, Hillel BC continued to provide many opportunities for students to explore and strengthen their Jewish Identity through events, shared experiences, and learning opportunities.

With many of our programs offered online, Hillel BC continued to play a vital role in shaping the future of our Jewish community.

The following pages exhibit a few examples of the programs we delivered this past year.



JEWISH LEARNING FELLOWSHIP (JLF)

Hillel BC delivered this nine-week educational seminar series in conjunction with Hillel International (virtual for 2021).

This year, 13 students participated, including at least one student from each of our five active campuses; we encouraged Jewish university students with various engagement levels in Jewish communal life to participate. Seminar topics included the study of Torah, the rhythm of the Jewish calendar, and the pluralistic exploration of Jewish culture, ritual, and spirituality. Sessions took place weekly and concluded with a cohort havdallah and graduation.

HIGH HOLIDAYS

Hillel BC offered students a full range of virtual programming during the High Holidays including: Erev Rosh HaShanah Shabbat dinner, Rosh HaShanah services on day one, Erev Yom Kippur dinner and intention setting, and Yom Kippur services and Break Fast meal.



Although all programming was virtual, many of our students signed up for meals which were either picked up or delivered to them for each event. High Holidays services were open to students and community members.

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hillel BC hosted Victoria resident Julius Maslovat, a child survivor of the Holocaust, to share his story and answer questions at a virtual event.

We opened with an introduction of Julius, watched *Why am I Here?*, the documentary of his story, and then opened the floor up to questions. Julius was only two years old when he became the youngest prisoner on record at Germany's Buchenwald concentration camp. His story of survival and hearing the experiences of his family made for a compelling program.



The event was open to students and community members in the Lower Mainland and Victoria and was well-attended by a wide range of ages.





OTHER HOLIDAYS CELEBRATIONS

Hillel BC built a sukkah at UVic and UBC where students could drop by to perform the mitzvot of eating in the sukkah and shaking the lulav and etrog.

For Hanukkah, Hillel BC provided a combination “Hanukkah and Exam Kit” which had candles and gelt, as well as some exam time treats to help students through the busy final few weeks of the semester. For Tu B’shevat Hillel hosted a card making event led by one of our talented students at Emily Carr University of Art + Design (ECUAD).

PESACH

Pesach 2021 was a virtual event open to all students and community members. Hillel BC partnered with the Community Kollel to ensure students had full meals and seder plate kits delivered.



In addition to providing the meals, we hosted a seder on the second night led by Rabbi Bregman and featured many student readers. Over 50 students and 20 community members attended.



SHABBAT

This year Hillel BC hosted bi-weekly virtual Shabbat dinners over both semesters. The meals were cooked and packaged at our UBC Hillel kitchen and then either delivered to or picked up by the students. The program portion always began at 6:00 p.m. and featured a combination of ice breakers, intention setting activities, games, parasha of the week lesson, and the blessings. Students were then encouraged to stay online and eat “with” their peers. A few of the dinners had adjacent holiday themes, some just general, and one special “Family Shabbat” to end the fall semester where we encouraged students’ families to join us online.



‘SHABUBBLES’

When health restrictions allowed, we encouraged students to host small Shabbat dinners in their homes on weeks we were not hosting the virtual events, and then asked them “who is in your Shabubble?” Hillel BC provided students funds for the dinners, along with candles, grape juice, challah, and a blessing card for their dinners. Group pictures of the “Shabubble dinners” were also shared.

ASK ME, I AM A JEW

Hillel BC at Simon Fraser University hosted an open forum for students to ask questions about Judaism. Questions ranged from “what does being Jewish mean to you?” to “How do you celebrate Shabbat?” to “What is something/a saying that your community says often? Or in other words, is there anything said by Elders in your community that resonates with you folks?” All members of the Simon Fraser Student Society executive attended the event, an important step as we continue to build our relationship with the students’ union, and solidify our presence on the SFU campus.



RUSSIAN SPEAKING JEWISH STUDENTS

Through Hillel International and the Genesis Philanthropy Group, we received a grant to do outreach and programming specifically for Russian Speaking Jewish students.

This included a Limmud-style learning event called “Follow Your Roots” which was done in partnership with other Hillels in Canada, a Russian Shabbat dinner with a themed menu, and a ‘Maslenitsa’ program featuring a presentation by an Associate Professor of Slavic Studies at UBC.

GENERAL PROGRAMMING

Bi-weekly during the fall semester, and weekly during the winter semester, Hillel BC hosted drop-in virtual game nights for students, usually playing a Jackbox game or Among Us. Students looked forward to the casual and fun environment that the game nights provided.

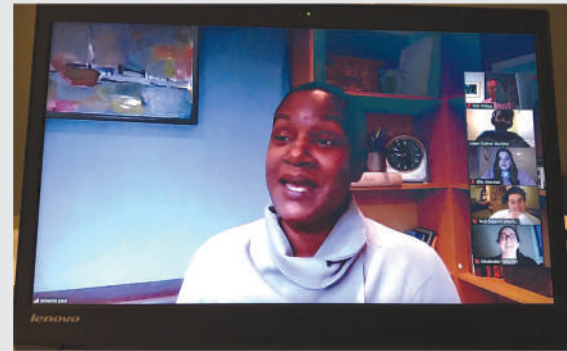
For the winter semester we had a three-week drop-in Jewish crafting series. In late spring we hosted a virtual “Hillel fair” for Grade 12 students from King David High School in Vancouver. Eight Hillels from B.C., Ontario and Montreal presented to the students as they prepared for university in the fall.

AN EVENING WITH ANNAMIE PAUL

Hillel BC was honoured to host Madame Annamie Paul, leader of the Green Party of Canada for a presentation to students and community members.

She is the first Jewish woman and first Black Canadian to be the leader of a federal party.

She spoke to us about her Jewish journey (including her conversion done through her university Hillel!), how her Judaism influences her leadership, and her experiences as a person in a high-power position with many identity intersections.





ISRAEL PROGRAMMING

Hillel BC is proud to be a safe space on campus where students can explore, learn about, and celebrate their Jewish Homeland.

We are witnessing first-hand the growth of anti-Israel sentiments across our campuses. We choose to combat this by hosting events that discuss both the beauty and complexities of Israel.

In the following pages, you can see examples of how we continue to feature Israel throughout the year, keeping it in the hearts and minds of our students.



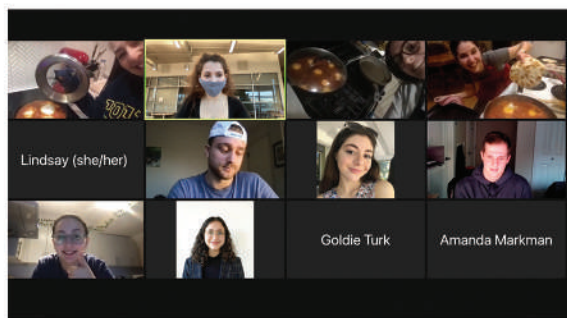
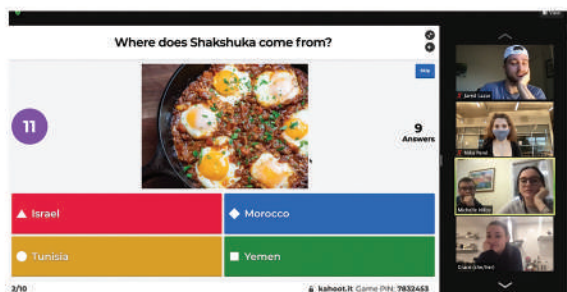
ISRAEL MONTH

For the last few years, Hillel BC has run “Israel Week” on the UBC campus which featured programs and speakers highlighting different aspects of Israel and Israeli culture.

With all events virtual, we extended it to “Israel Month” with each week having a different theme.

For Israel in Music week we featured a different Israeli artist on our social media each day. The artists represented a wide range of genres, ethnicities, and levels of orthodoxy.

For Israel in Food week, we hosted a shakshuka and flatbread making class over Zoom and played a trivia game. Ayelet Tsabari, a Canadian Israeli writer and SFU alumna joined us for an event during Israel in Culture week, where she spoke about her award-winning and highly acclaimed book of short stories.



ISRAEL SHABBAT

Led by the UBC Israel on Campus (IOC) club and part of “Israel Month”, Israel Shabbat featured an Israeli menu and a learning session about Israel.



Students learned about Israel “beyond the conflict” and highlighted many of the successes that Israel has had over the years.

ARTISTS 4 ISRAEL

During the third week of “Israel Month” we were excited to welcome back Artists 4 Israel and host their presentation “Israel in Pictures”.

We learned about their trip to Israel with Estevan Oriol, a famous tattoo artist from Mexico, where he immersed himself in the Tel Aviv street art scene and took many beautiful photos to showcase his trip.



ANTISEMITISM PANEL

Again this year, the UBC Israel On Campus club hosted a panel of students who have dealt with antisemitism on campus.

With the sudden switch to online classes, this year's panel focused specifically on antisemitism in online spaces. Panelists joined us from UBC, Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario and the University of California Los Angeles to share a wide variety of experiences from issues on social media, issues in Greek life, to being scapegoated on campus because of a conference they attended.

ISRAEL LEARNING FELLOWSHIP

Offered through Hillel BC for the first time at UBC, students met once per week for eight weeks to do partner and whole group learning. The theme of the fellowship was "Pluralism in Israel" with discussions and activities around religious, ethnic, and cultural topics.

ISRAEL LEARNING DISCUSSIONS

Twice monthly, the UBC Israel On Campus executive board and various guest learners met to do small group learning on current events in Israel. They were provided with an article or video in advance and came prepared to discuss.

These sessions were designed to enhance the students' "tool kit" for discussing topics related to Israel on campus.

PARALYMPIAN PANEL

As part of Jewish Disabilities Awareness and Inclusion Month (JDAIM), Hillels across Canada

partnered with Hillel International and Hillel @ Home (an offering created by Hillel International in March 2020) to host a panel of three Israeli Paralympic athletes. The athletes all compete in different Olympic events and became Paralympians in different ways. Students had a chance to ask questions after the athletes shared their stories.

COMBATING BDS AND ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS

In May 2021, SFU Jewish students became aware of a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) motion targeting Israel for vote by the Simon Fraser University Student Society (SFSS).

The effort to pass this motion was planned through private social media channels, allowing our students only a limited time to prepare a plan to oppose.

One of our Hillel SFU students presented a clear argument to the SFSS during the motion hearing, explaining that BDS is rooted in antisemitism and stands in the way of academic freedom. Unfortunately, the motion passed at the SFSS level anyway.

Shortly after the motion passed, SFU Jewish students with support from Hillel BC, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) and some Hillel BC donors, contacted the SFU President's office through multiple channels to explain the reasons behind our strong dissent to this motion.

Hillel BC met with the SFU administration on several occasions and continue to be in close contact with them over this issue.

These meetings and conversations resulted in SFU President and Vice Chancellor, Joy Johnson, issuing an official statement via Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn condemning antisemitism. Her statements have been widely read.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT WELL-BEING

In addition to helping keep our students connected with their roots, we are on a constant pursuit to prepare them to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Hillel BC organizes trainings and events to promote leadership development, and regularly shares other developmental opportunities and resources with the students to keep them updated.

Our programs also focus on the well-being of our students; and while we always stay connected with them, we ensure added support during crucial times.



EXECUTIVE ONBOARDING

Jewish Student Executives from UBC, SFU, Langara, and ECUAD met each week for six weeks during the fall semester to learn together about being student leaders. They built bridges between the campuses and ran through challenging scenarios that can and do arise on campus. The goal of this was to ensure that all student leaders in our organization receive equal training and resources to do their jobs to the best of their ability.



EXAM PACKAGES

We assembled exam kits for students during their most stressful time of the semester. The kits included snacks and supplies (granola bars, Post-its, pens, highlighters etc.). The December bag was a combination “Hannukah and Exam Kit”.

“Being a third culture kid struggling with a sense of “home”, Hillel helped me feel pride in who I am for the first time in a while, without sacrificing the pluralistic dimensions of what I believe to be my identity. Hillel feels like a family away from family, a home that is not a place but rather a community.”



The background of the entire page is a photograph of students at an outdoor event, possibly a fair or festival. They are standing around a table covered with a white cloth. Some students are wearing face masks. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color. In the top right corner, there is a small logo consisting of four colored dots (blue, yellow, red, green) arranged in a square.

HILLEL BC IN VICTORIA

UVic-focused programs help us maintain and develop a vibrant Jewish community on this campus.

All Hillel BC activities this year have been adapted to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions. An unexpected and positive result of the restrictions was the opportunity for UVic and Mainland students to collaborate on planning and delivering different online programs.

These efforts led to new friendships across campuses and allowed our students (both at UVic and on the Mainland) to experience being a part of a larger Jewish community.



CLUBS DAY

Club leaders and staff hosted a Hillel “room” for virtual Clubs Day during both semesters. Students had the opportunity to go from room to room and explore the clubs that interest them.

SHABBAT DINNERS

Hillel BC in Victoria hosted monthly Shabbat dinners for the UVic community, with a few of them being the same day as Hillel’s BC-wide Shabbat dinners. For these larger events, student leaders from Victoria worked with those from Vancouver to plan and host them including the Purim Shabbat and Purim party in February which featured a costume contest, story retelling, and party games.

HOLIDAYS

Hillel BC in Victoria offered students many opportunities to participate in Jewish holidays throughout the year. There were dinners for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. Students assisted in putting up a sukkah at the Victoria house and hosted both “Sushi in the Sukkah” and “Shakshuka in the Sukkah” events. Around Purim students had the opportunity to make hamentaschen.



UVIC FRIENDS OF ISRAEL

To celebrate Tu Bishvat, the UVic Friends of Israel club hosted an event that taught participants about the holiday and the foods that we eat for it as well as agritech in Israel. A guest speaker from the Royal Commonwealth Society gave a presentation about their tree-centered initiatives. All participants received a Tu Bishvat package that included a plant and the “seven species”.



UVic Friends of Israel also hosted multiple virtual cooking events this year for students to make challah and falafel.

MOVIE AND PIZZA NIGHT

Students gathered virtually for a social evening of dinner and a movie. They watched the animated film “The Prince of Egypt” to get into the spirit of Passover.

PASSOVER COOKING NIGHT

Students received Passover packages with matzah and all the items for the seder plate. They spent time together in the evening cooking together (over Zoom) to prepare for Passover.

HOW TO FIND YOUR SOULMATE

This was an interactive online discussion with Rabbi Matthew Ponak of Victoria. Students received “soup for the soul” to eat and candy care packages to enjoy while learning about the Jewish perspective on the idea of soulmates.

VIRTUAL INTERFAITH PROGRAM (PART OF INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK)

Hosted by the Victoria Multifaith Society and the UVic chaplaincy, a panel of students convened to host a panel about their culture and heritage. A Jewish student and UVic Hillel club leader participated in the panel and spoke about her grandparents surviving the Holocaust and eventually reclaiming their Judaism.



THE COMING YEAR

We are coming out of what has been one of the most challenging years for Hillel BC and so many others of course.

We are hopeful that the coming fall semester will see some more in person programming and that we can get back to some of the traditional programs that we have held in the past. We will adapt to more of a hybrid model so that some of the benefits of the online experience where we were able to be more inclusive with all our campuses will also be an option for some of our programs.

On the staffing side of things, Hillel BC is known as a wonderful training ground and we are pleased that many of our staff have filled important roles in other local and national Jewish organizations. We also look forward to welcoming many new staff faces in our program team. Our website, HillelBC.com has a current list of staff and their biographies.

Again, we are very thankful to the ongoing support from the community and our donors who help us create and maintain a Jewish life on campus.



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HillelBC



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HillelBCUVic



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