



UPDATED Mar 18, 2020

Dear Hillel Community,

COVID-19, the “Coronavirus”, and the news surrounding the virus and its impact on communities worldwide has been changing daily. Recent announcements made by BC health officials asking the public to stay indoors except for essential tasks has prompted us at Hillel BC to assess our current operating procedures. As of this morning, all Hillel BC spaces in Vancouver and Victoria are closed to students, faculty, and the wider community. We have moved programming online for the time being, and are continuously innovating new methods to engage in Jewish community building. Keep your eyes on our social media for opportunities to engage virtually in the coming days and weeks and please contact us if you have suggestions or ideas to better serve you in this unprecedented time.

Wishing you health, connection, and community,

Team Hillel BC – Sam Heller, Rabbi Philip Bregman, Lindsay Kerr, Ohad Gavrieli, Tanya Mordkovich, Noa Farage, Ora Stefanic, Katia Fermon and Grace Miller-Day

POSTED Mar 16, 2020

Dear Hillel Community,

One of the greatest gifts of Judaism is its abundance of options, opinions, and the space for all of them in one big tent. In moments of uncertainty, however, Judaism also offers us the gift of clarity: As we cope with the rapidly changing COVID -19 pandemic, pikuach nefesh, the preservation of life and health provides us a distinct and clear path forward. Out of an abundance of caution, Hillel BC is postponing all formal in-person programming for the time being. This includes but is not limited to Shabbat dinners, Schmooze and Schmear, Ask the Rabbi, and Hillel Hot Lunch. We are guided by the recommendations of university officials, health officials, and Jewish community representatives. This decision is also following the announcement made by UBC, SFU, and UVic that they are moving to online classes for the duration of the semester. While we are not aware of any specific concerns on campuses we operate on, the potential for undetected transmission of COVID-19, the risks that would pose, and the high value we put on individual health and life leads us to err on the side of community safety.

We are working to continue as many programs as we can via online venues, and we will inform you about additional opportunities in the coming days. We encourage students to practice social distancing, take practical steps such as hand washing and avoiding close contact, and to stay home if at all symptomatic. Going forward, based on recommendations from the BC Minister of Health, we ask anyone who has been outside the country (including to the US) to please refrain from frequenting Hillel spaces until you have gone through a 14 day self isolation period.

For students studying at the University of British Columbia, Hillel House UBC will be open under staff supervision from 9:00am – 5:00pm Monday to Thursday, and 9:00am – 3:30pm on Friday until further notice. The Hillel House in Victoria will be open as a study space with hours still to be determined. Hillel programs taking place at SFU, Emily Carr, Langara, Kwantlen, and Quest are postponed until further notice. We will be providing regular updates via social media and through our newsletter.

Hillel BC remains steadfastly committed to our students. We will work to create more innovative ways to reach you and anticipate how to respond to your needs during this challenging time of disruption and isolation. Through the years, Hillel has excelled in finding unique ways to come together and be a strong, resilient community of support for one another. This time will be no different.

We appreciate that this is an incredibly stressful and unprecedented time. We encourage you to reach out to us if you'd like to talk or need support.

Wishing you health, connection, and community,

Team Hillel BC – Sam Heller, Rabbi Philip Bregman, Lindsay Kerr, Ohad Gavrieli, Tanya Mordkovich, Noa Farage, Ora Stefanic, Katia Fermon and Grace Miller-Day