



Spirituality | Learning | Culture

Annual Report 2020-21

Makom – meaning place in Hebrew – is an inclusive community fusing Jewish tradition and progressive values through spirituality, learning and culture. Makom inspires diverse participants to explore together how Judaism can meaningfully enrich our lives.

Online Programs

As the COVID-19 pandemic persisted through the second half of 2020 and well into 2021, Makom continued to offer a steady roster of online programs for our community. Through joyous Kabbalat Shabbat services, song-filled Havdalah ceremonies, daytime and evening Torah study classes and twice-weekly neySHEV meditation sits, we helped people connect with Judaism and each other.



“The efforts to keep this far-flung, diverse community connected through these challenging times are truly and deeply appreciated”



“The reading was very well-done and the Persian music was truly fantastic!”

Makom marked holidays together with candle lighting and activities every night of Hanukkah; a Tu bi-Shvat seder; Purim lecture, concert, party, and evening and morning Megillah readings; pre-Passover classes; Yizkor memorial services and a Tikkun Pre-Shavuot, all online.



“We had a very strong feeling of community, despite being over Zoom!”

Outdoor Gatherings

In summer 2020, Makom began adding outdoor, in-person programs to our online lineup. St. Peter's Church warmly welcomed us to hold our distanced Friday night and Tishah be-Av services in their yard. After months of lockdown, it was thrilling to gather together in real life.



As the weather turned brisk, we hiked the route of the now-buried Garrison Creek, which flows under the city, and learned about the natural, Indigenous, and urban histories of this land.



Despite the low (and ever-changing) pandemic gathering limits, we welcomed more than 200 community members to **27** different outdoor High Holiday experiences.

Such "*ruach*" right to the end! –Toni

[The] chanting and Neilah service was my most intense Yom Kippur davening in my life. It was beautiful and meaningful davening in the park.

–Lauren

Over four glorious days in Christie Pits Park, we held traditional services, family services, meditation sits, Torah study, an interfaith couples' gathering, mindful chanting, and multiple shofar blowings for the broader downtown Jewish community.

I'm just so grateful I got to daven in person with other members of my community!

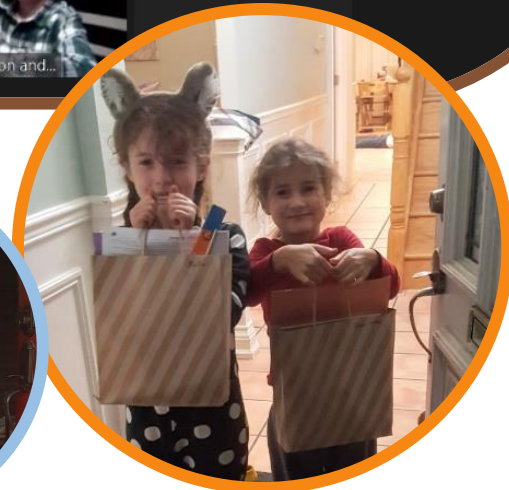
–Ilana



Connecting Families

Through the many pandemic lockdowns, Makom families gathered together online to celebrate holidays with dedicated family programming.

Families made spice sets for Havdalah, built Hanukkiot and lit Hanukkah candles together, planted seeds for Tu bi-Shvat, heard an abridged Purim Megillah reading accompanied by our students' illustrations, learned about and created Passover Seder plates, and made cheesecake for Shavuot.



Rabbi Aaron personally delivered program materials, some of which were provided by UJA Federation's Unboxing Jewish project, to families. These drop-offs became opportunities to connect and check in with parents and children in person.

Feeding the Hungry

While Makom's College Street storefront has been closed to the public during the pandemic, we have utilized our space to collaborate with local organizations and provide food for our neighbours in need.

In September 2020, a team of volunteers cooked a hot, nutritious, take-out lunch at Makom for Fort York Food Bank to distribute to 75 people experiencing hunger.



Since January 2021, Makom has been hosting Toronto Food Not Bombs. Using Makom's space to store and prepare donated food has enabled them to expand their operations significantly and to provide groceries and fresh meals to nearly 600 people in need each week.

Makom Afterschool Flex

2020-21

Although we were unable to run Makom Afterschool in our usual locations in TDSB schools due to the pandemic, we made the most of the flexibility and personalized attention possible with online learning.



Makom Afterschool Flex provided Hebrew and Jewish tutoring to students in JK through Grade 5, individually or in pairs. Students learned a lot and had fun, and their parents were highly satisfied with the model.

44

students enrolled



\$12,375

given out in
tuition
subsidies



Makom never turns any children away from Jewish education due to lack of funds. With generous support from Makom donors and UJA Federation, we provide financial support to all who need it.



Makom ATID, our Hebrew and Jewish learning program for students in Grades 6 through 8, ran online for the 2020-2021 school year. Through in-depth text study, class discussion, and multimedia resources, eight students studied the full cycle of Jewish holidays and the entirety of Bereishit (Genesis), the first book of the Torah.

I love the symbolism and stories behind all the things found on the seder plate. –Sahara



MAKOM ATID
Afterschool Torah Im Derekh-Eretz

Makom is an enthusiastic, open minded, and joyful learning place that I will look back on fondly. –
Camille

In June, we celebrated the first Makom ATID graduation, with six Grade 8 students and their families, together with future Makom ATID students (current Makom Afterschool students), in a virtual ceremony.

ATID opened the Jewish world to me in a new way. –
Levia

Interfaith Couples

On Rosh Hashanah 2020 (in person) and then online monthly since February 2021, Makom has convened gatherings for interfaith/intercultural couples to meet one another and learn about Judaism together.

“I learned a lot that certainly never came up in Hebrew school.”

“I so appreciate that this has been an ongoing thing. It means a lot to me”

Topics explored in 2020-2021:

- The Meanings of the Shofar
- Purim
- Passover
- The Jewish Calendar
- Shavuot
- Shabbat

“My partner and I have participated in a few of Makom's interfaith events and have appreciated both your approach to inclusivity as well as intellectual curiosity - never dumbing down material for the audience”

56

Interfaith couples
involved in Makom

These gatherings advance adult Jewish education and demonstrate that interfaith couples are warmly welcome in the Makom community.



Diversity & Inclusion

In response to No Silence on Race's call to action for Jewish organizations to address racial inequity in Jewish communities, Makom board member Tae Hart and Rabbi Aaron composed an anti-racism statement and plan, which the board approved in December 2020.

Areas of focus:

- Education & Programming
- Allyship
- Partnerships
- Communications
- Indigeneity & De-Colonization

The first human was created alone... for peace among humanity, so that one person can't say to another: "My ancestors are greater than your ancestors." –Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5

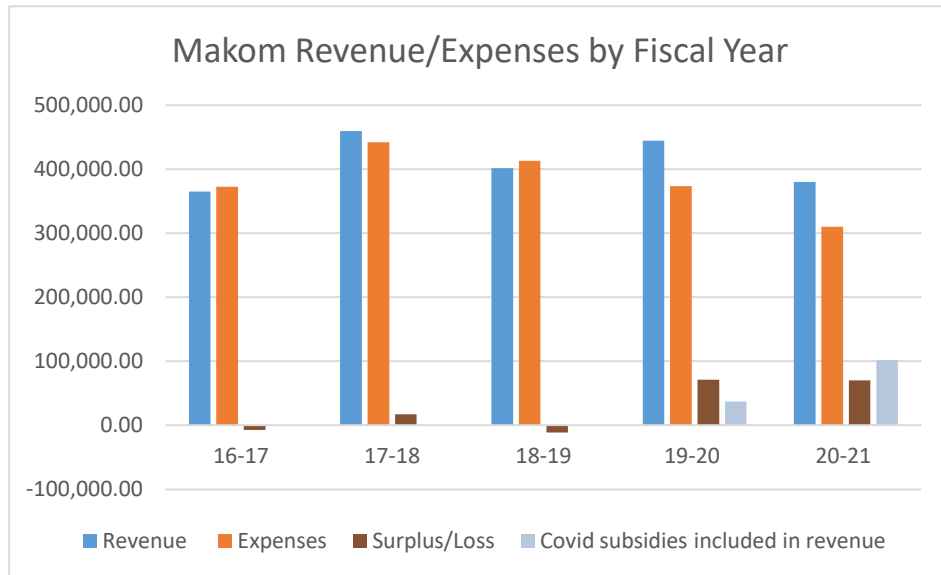
Steps taken 2020-2021:

- Formation of Jewish Inclusion Advisory Team
- Moroccan Sfinge (Hanukkah doughnuts) cooking demonstration
- Moroccan Hanukkah songs session
- Inclusion of Sepharadi/Mizrahi sources in adult education classes
- Ongoing participation in Jewish DEI working group
- Reviewed website copy & images

Makom is committed to building an inclusive and diverse community that actively welcomes Jews and non-Jews of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and that promotes everyone's equality, dignity, and welfare.

Finances

Makom's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30.



During the pandemic, government Covid subsidies have helped Makom continue to operate, and even resulted in a larger-than-usual surplus at the end of each fiscal year. These funds will support us through our recovery when we restart in-person Afterschool after years of disruption.

Registered Charity Number 828311712RR0001

Makom relies on the support of our generous donors. Thank you to everyone who donated this year!

Fiscal Year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

288
individual
donors

\$133,151
Total Donations

Makom operates on a tight budget; your contributions really do make a difference!

www.makomTO.org/donate

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