

**McGill University**  
Ramah College Network  
Summary of Survey Results

General Demographics

Several Ramahniks at McGill University responded to the survey. The students have attended one of the following Ramah camps: Canada, Nyack, New England and Wisconsin. Some students attended Seminar.

**The Search Process**

The Impact of Ramah on the College Decision

Ramah positively impacted the college decision of most of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey. One student wrote: “My years at Nyack fostered my love for my religion, and I certainly didn't want to lose that when I attended university. At McGill, I have been able to continue my Jewish learning at my own pace.” Another student wrote about how his experiences at Ramah taught him a lot about life, which in turn impacted his decision to attend McGill: “Attending Ramah has taught me more about the importance of compassion than any other life experience. In comparison to my experiences at another camp for 11 years, I can honestly say that my short tenure at Camp Ramah has taught me more about who I am and who I want to be more than any other summer experience.”

Other Schools Considered

Queen's University, University of Western Ontario, University of Toronto, Dalhousie University, University of Pittsburgh, Indiana University, University of Wisconsin, Vanderbilt University

Attributes Looked for in a School

Students looked for an academic environment that would be attentive to undergraduates and offered a wide variety of courses. They were also interested in large schools that could offer cultural diversity and a thriving, active Jewish community.

Best Aspects of the School

Nearly all of the Ramahniks who responded to this survey wrote that McGill's location in Montreal is the best aspect of their school: “Montreal is fantastic and full of activities everyday that are cultural, artistic, and political.” Some students also referred to the active Jewish population: “McGill has a vibrant Jewish community including a student-run shul with weekly Shabbat dinners and various events throughout the week.”

**Jewish Life on Campus**

Kosher Dining Options

One student explained the kosher food system at McGill: “Students can eat at the several kosher restaurants off campus. There is also the Hillel house, which runs a kosher meat restaurant. The restaurant at Hillel is reasonably priced but is not part of the student meal

plan. On-campus with a school meal plan, there are packaged Kosher sandwiches. Students who live off-campus easily find other students who want to keep a kosher home. Additionally, the Ghetto Shul, Chabad and Hillel offer free Shabbat meals. Because the Hillel house is off campus, many students find it inconvenient to go there for kosher food, and end up only eating meat on Shabbat. Students appreciate that kosher food is offered, but wish that it were more readily available.

### Worship/Services

Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, and Chabad religious services are available to McGill University students. Ramahniks who responded to this survey estimated that 100-150 students attend Friday night services and 30-40 students attend Shabbat morning services. Some students expressed that they wished that the Conservative minyan had a larger following, as many students attend the Ghetto Shul for an Orthodox minyan. The Ghetto Shul located in the Bagg Street Shul, the oldest standing synagogue building that is still a synagogue in Montreal. It is a 15 minute walk east of the McGill campus. Reform and Conservative services happen on a bi-weekly basis at Hillel.

### Jewish Studies

McGill offers a wide range of Jewish Studies courses. Students recommend Teaching and Understanding Jewish Life, Denominations of North American Jewry, and Religion of Ancient Israel, as well as all Hebrew & Yiddish language classes and any class taught by Eric Caplan.

### Jewish Social Life

There is a large Jewish population at McGill, so students say that it is very easy to find Jewish social activities on campus. Both Hillel and the Ghetto shul sponsor a number of events every week. One Ramahnik commented that although there is a large Jewish community at McGill, there is “less inclusiveness and strong sense of community than I expected.”

### Hillel Activities

Hillel at McGill offers a wide range of activities, including religious services, Israel programming, study opportunities, and social action (tzedeck) opportunities. One student wrote, “the Hillel house itself is used as a lounge and a residence. It has a kosher meat restaurant, couches, and TVs.” Despite McGill’s large Jewish population and so many programs at Hillel, according to some student it is difficult to get students to attend Hillel programming. Hillel holds services every other week – Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox.

### Other Options for Jewish Social Life

The 'Ghetto Shul', is an Orthodox synagogue that also offers weekly learning, activities, and fundraisers. Additionally, Chabad also has a strong presence on campus with events and weekday programming. There are a number of clubs involved in Israeli culture and political issues.

### Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Activity on Campus

The Ramahniks who responded to this survey indicated that they have never personally experienced antisemitism at McGill. Because of the diverse student population at McGill, opinions on Israel are varied.

### **Ramahniks' Advice to Prospective Students**

Ramahniks at McGill University recommend that prospective students come for a visit to experience Shabbat in a great Jewish community, to explore the city of Montreal, and to get a taste of McGill's great academics.

“Attend a few classes at the school to see what it's like. Attend a Shabbat dinner at the Ghetto Shul and spend a weekend in Montreal. Talk to students currently taking the program you are interested in.”

“McGill is a great all around school, with options and choices for a variety of programs, both academic and extracurricular.”

“McGill is a very traditional school. Classes are large and can be very impersonal. But students will learn to be independent and will be exposed to a variety of perspectives.

“Montreal is a wonderful city and many of the students at McGill are passionate and educated.”

To receive contact information for Ramahniks at McGill University (or another college on the Ramah College Network), please email Alana Tilman at [ramahdesk@campramah.org](mailto:ramahdesk@campramah.org). Please include your name, your Ramah affiliation, and the college(s) for which you would like contact information.

Updated: February 2013