



Limmud FSU -

A 2013

Retrospective

Limmud FSU Celebrates Exponential Growth and Success

Limmud FSU is a stealth force in the world of informal Jewish education for the young Russian-speaking Jewish community. Today, we experience their passion and burgeoning interest in their Jewish heritage, reflecting their drive and desire to understand what it is to be Jewish. Entering its eighth year, volunteerism and participation in Limmud FSU events has grown exponentially.

As we travel on behalf of Limmud FSU, from Moscow and Ukraine to Belarus, Israel, Moldova, St. Petersburg, Canada and the United States, we continue to be inspired by the intellectual and spiritual hunger of the participants, who were eager to understand: "What is being Jewish about?" It is the uniqueness of the Limmud model that provides young Russian-speaking Jewry an unfettered, safe environment to learn about their Jewish roots and history and, most importantly, about their place in the Jewish community.

The amazing growth of Limmud FSU – from a few hundred in 2006 to roughly 25,000 participants in 2013 – showcases the yearning for Jewish knowledge throughout the transglobal Russian-speaking Jewish world. As Limmud FSU forges ahead, the outstanding enthusiasm

and genuine passion on the ground from Russian-speaking volunteers, participants, and presenters have encouraged Limmud FSU to do more, to engage more Russian-speaking Jewry, and to support local communities in their efforts to "own" their programming. Indeed, each Limmud FSU conference is an expression of local interests, local culture, and local strengths.

The following pages highlight 2013 Limmud FSU conferences and also offer a glance at plans for 2014. However, none of this would be possible without the collaboration, partnership, and generosity of global Jewish organizations and our generous donors. And, we want to thank the volunteers in every community who work so hard to make each Limmud FSU conference and festival an outstanding success.

In a few short years, dynamism and visionary leadership at every level have transformed the lives of thousands of young Russian-speaking Jewish adults who are becoming knowledgeable and reconnected with their heritage and culture. We hope you will enjoy reading about Limmud FSU, truly an important and unique 'growing' Jewish learning organization.



Matthew Bronfman

Chair, Limmud FSU
International Steering
Committee



Aaron Frenkel

President, Limmud FSU

Looking Ahead - Expanding Jewish Learning in 2014

For almost eight years, we have been striving to help young Russian-speaking Jewish adults in the former Soviet Union, in Israel, and in New York reconnect with their Jewish heritage and roots. In a sense, we are helping to repair our Jewish world, improve their connection with the global Jewish community, and encourage their involvement within their own communities. This posed a challenge for Russian-speaking Jewish families who experienced the lack of Jewish values, Jewish traditions, and identity for over 70 years under communism.

Limmud FSU began with the notion that we could adapt the 25 year-old Limmud model of informal Jewish learning to fit the specific needs of young Russian-speaking adults who lacked any knowledge of volunteerism and philanthropy, and who had scant understanding of Judaism or Jewish culture. Through perseverance and gentle guidance, Limmud FSU has taken off, now holding annual gathering in eight countries for Russian-speaking Jewry. Yes, from a modest start with 50 volunteers in Moscow, this spark of an idea has succeeded.

Many individual donors and our global Jewish partner organizations, seeing both the potential and witnessing today's success, continue to provide generous funding and positive encouragement, for which we are extremely thankful. Even more exciting, is that the Russian-speaking community itself wants more - the local Limmud FSU's are becoming self-sustaining and attracting more and more volunteers. Their desire to learn, to lead, and to become more involved as they see the value of volunteering for those causes that excite their passions.

This enthusiasm finds expression in the growing num-

ber of Limmud FSU participants. For example, there is a huge increase from 320 participants in Limmud FSU Moscow in 2009 to 1,100 participants in 2013. In the scale of our financial operations, we have grown from \$1.1m in 2009 to \$2m in 2013. We're also adapting our organizational infrastructure. In 2013, we set up a new independent charitable foundation, Limmud in Ukraine, which joins the Israeli amuta, Limmud - Russian Speakers, Israel, established in 2011, as a local entity dedicated to Limmud FSU activities.

We will be making another leap forward in 2014 to eight major conferences, together with several additional events, including the bi-annual Global Leadership Summit. The overall global budget will be \$2.8m thanks to our new partners: the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews and the Israel Ministry of Education.

Thinking about the year ahead, we are very excited to announce Limmud FSU Canada 2014. For the past two years, a representative group of more than 70 young Russian-speaking Toronto Jews have participated in Limmud FSU's three-day conferences in Princeton, New Jersey. Now, these young people are eager to develop a Limmud FSU conference in their own community.

For this premiere conference, for an estimated 500 Russian-speaking Jews from across Canada, Limmud FSU is delighted that the Honorable Irwin Cotler, a Member of Parliament for Mount Royal, will be the honorary chairman.

We cordially invite you to join us in 2014 for one of Limmud FSU's dynamic, energetic, and exciting global Jewish learning happenings.



Chaim Chesler
(Israel)
Founder



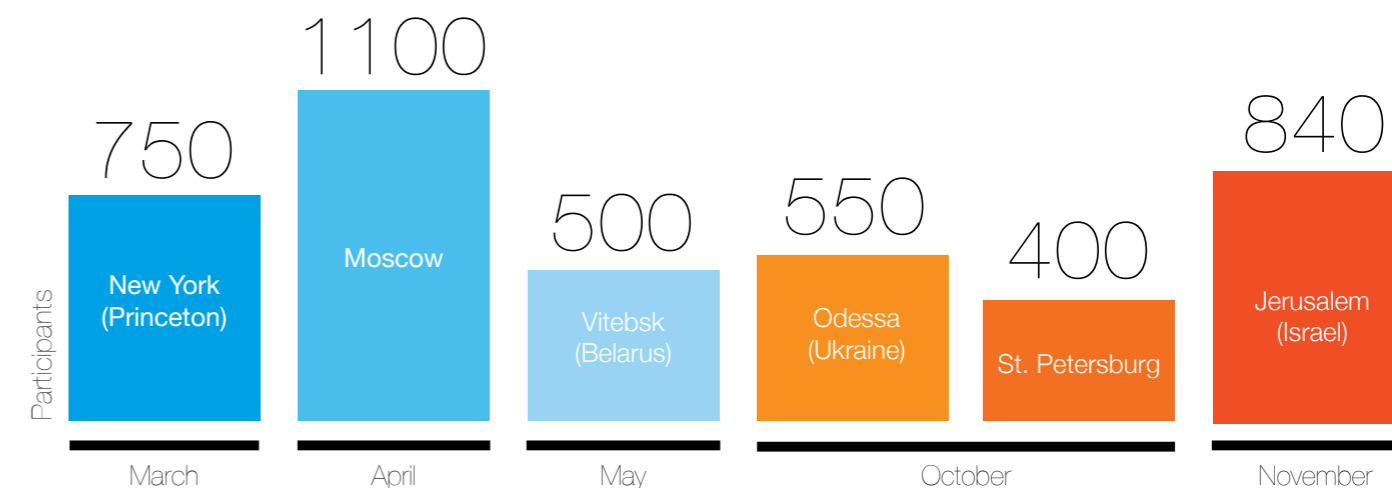
Sandra Cahn
(United States)
Co-founder



Mikhail Chelnov
(Russia)
Co-founder

Our Global Impact

The growth of Limmud FSU, from the spark of an idea for a unique program of informal Jewish education for Russian-speaking Jewry, has evolved into a lively locally driven volunteer organization with individual events in eight locations



2013 LIMMUD FSU CONFERENCES AND FESTIVALS

The Largest Limmud FSU Conference in Moscow

Representing the flagship of Limmud FSU's initiative for young Russian-speaking adults, a record number of 1,100 participants, gathered in April 2013 for the largest Limmud FSU Moscow since its inception in 2006. Considered to be one of the most prestigious Jewish cultural and educational events in the FSU, this year's conference was packed with lectures and a wide-range of cultural events..

Quoting from an interview in the *Jerusalem Post*, Anna Kandaurova, 26, a Moscow-based musician and journalist, said

that due to the lack of religious persecution in Russia today, she actually feels less connected to Judaism. "As disgusting as the persecution of Jews was, it contributed to empowering our collective identity as Jews in the Diaspora," she said. "I think that the Russian-Jewish diaspora was shaped by the Soviet era, which is now a bygone [time]. Now we need to redefine who we are because of the necessity to remain a close-knit and recognizable community."





Limmud FSU Princeton Looks Back at the Soviet Jewry Movement

York metropolitan area, where over 25% of the Jewish community is Russian speaking - cannot be underestimated. Roughly 750 Russian-speaking Jews took part in the Princeton Limmud FSU Conference in March 2013.

The central theme of the 2013 Limmud FSU Conference in Princeton was the 25th anniversary of the emigration of the Jews from the Soviet Union. Praising the outstanding Organizing Committee, Sandra Cahn, Limmud FSU co-founder, observed, "This conference reflects the maturity of the organization and its ability to draw participants from all segments of the American Russian-speaking Jewish community."

Alina Bitel, Limmud FSU in Princeton, co-chair, agreed, saying, "This Conference represented an important, safe space for young Russian-speaking Jews to come together and enjoy eclectic conversations, meaningful discussions, soulful interaction, and Kafkaesque debates."



FSU in Vitebsk - Exploring The Cultural Capital of Belarus

Over 500 Jews from across Belarus, most of them aged 20-40 years, gathered in Vitebsk, Belarus from May 31-June 2, 2013, for the first Limmud FSU Belarus. Galina Levina, chair of Limmud FSU Belarus Organizing Committee explained, "We have brought together a big family of our friends from different countries to touch and to feel Jewish culture and life— not as [an exercise in] nostalgia, but as the proud modern Jewish community of Belarus."

Prior to the Limmud FSU festival in Vitebsk, a series of ceremonial events took place in Vishnyeva, Belarus, the town where Israel's President Shimon Peres was born, to celebrate his ninetieth birthday. As part of the program, a special photographic exhibition was opened dedicated to the life and work of President Peres. Limmud FSU representatives and participants, together with citizens of the town, held an emotional memorial service at the "Valley of Death" monument, which commemorates the 2,000 Jews of Vishnyeva murdered at the hands of the Nazis.

Peres's daughter, celebrated linguist and author Professor Tzvia Walden, flew in from Israel with her husband, Sheba Medical Center deputy director Doctor Raphael Walden. "I feel like coming back home," said Walden when the Belarus government designated his modest childhood home a national monument.

Following the Limmud FSU Conference, participants took part in festivities, launching a series of events marking the 100th birthday of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin

Extolling Odessa's Huge Impact on the State of Israel and Israeli Culture

In October, Limmud FSU Odessa brought 550 Russian-speaking Jews from Ukraine together to celebrate the seventh Conference in Ukraine and the birthday of Israel's national poet Haim Nachman Bialik. Participants enjoyed the atmosphere of Jewish unity under the special Odessa sky.

The conference featured lectures and activities connected to the historic ties between Odessa and Tel Aviv and on the life of Bialik – one of the 20th century's most famous Hebrew-language poets, who was born in what is now Ukraine, 140 years ago. Kicking off the conference, the Bialik's House museum opened an exhibition on Israel's national poet, in Odessa, where he was born and published his first poem, entitled "Poet's Path."

Osik Akselrod, Limmud FSU's Ukraine chairman, was very pleased with the exceptional programming and said, "Limmud FSU is the most important and the biggest gathering of the Jewish community of Ukraine, exceeding all expectations."

St. Petersburg - The Spirit of Volunteerism and Pluralism

In October, Limmud FSU came to St. Petersburg, attracting approximately 400 people.

Limmud FSU in St. Petersburg differs from other Limmud conferences in its really intimate nature. Dima Zicer, an educator and one of the prime movers of Limmud FSU stated, "Three years ago, when we first thought about Limmud here, we understood that it was wrong that other cities had a Limmud of their own, but St. Petersburg, a cradle of Jewish culture, did not. We found people who were enthusiastic, and it was those people who created a unique style, making Limmud FSU in St. Petersburg different from the others with their own style and local cultural heritage."

Sofya Liakhovitskaya, a fourth-year student in clinical psychology, came to Limmud FSU for the first time: "I am interested in Jewish history and literature, and Limmud gives me just what I want. I love the atmosphere, the freedom, the pleasant people and the helpful volunteer organizers."

Jerusalem's Art Limmud FSU Festival

Converging on the capital's Kiryat Moriah's campus, over 840 Russian-speaking Israelis attended the annual three-day Jerusalem Art Limmud FSU Festival. The opening ceremonies featured the Peres/Begin Exhibition and were attended by President Shimon Peres and Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat. Hundreds of young Israelis from the former Soviet Union attended 80 lectures ranging from art history, science, philosophy and bible studies, and dance, too!

After attending a lecture, Katya Osmekousky, a recent college graduate from Moldova, said, "Limmud FSU empowers you by connecting interesting Jewish people from different countries who have different points of view." She added that she didn't know she was Jewish until the age of 11, and since then has utilized Limmud FSU as a means to learn about Jewish history and develop a greater connection with Israel.

Quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*, Chaim Chesler said, "We believe our educational model and continuing efforts will ensure a vibrant and sustainable Jewish future for young Russian-speaking adults throughout the world," he continued.





2014 Limmud FSU

- 1 US Conference New York (in New Jersey) - March 28-30, 2014
- 2 Moscow, Russia Conference April 24-27, 2014
- 3 Special Holocaust Memorial Event, Sighet, Romania May 16-18, 2014
- 4 Kishinev, Moldova Conference May 23-25, 2014
- 5 Global Leadership Summit - June 12-15, (in Kazan, Russia during the Jewish Music Festival)
- 6 Vitebsk, Belarus Conference September 2014
- 7 Toronto, Canada - October 24-26, 2014
- 8 Ukraine - November 6-9, 2014
- 9 St. Petersburg, Russia - November 28-30, 2014
- 10 Kineret, Israel - December 11-13, 2014



Limmud FSU Leadership and Staff

- Matthew Bronfman**,
Chair, International Steering Committee
- Aaron Frenkel**,
President
- Chaim Chesler**,
Founder and Executive Committee Chair
- Sandra F. Cahn**,
Co-founder and FRD Committee Chair
- Mikhail Chelnov**,
Co-founder
- Roman Kogan**,
COO
- Chaim Nagus**,
Financial and Management Consultant
- Raffi Heltzer**,
Chair of "Limmud - Russian Speakers, Israel"
- Osik Akselrud**,
Chair "Limud in Ukraine"
- Yan Birbraer**,
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- Jenya Nemirovskaya**,
Project Manager in Russia
- Galina Rybnikova**,
Project Manager in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova
- Noam Shumakh- Khaimov**,
Project Manager in New York
- Mila Voihanski**,
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- Yaroslav Brooke**,
Information and Resources Development
- Marcia P. Neeley**,
Communications Advisor and Newsletter Editor
- Boris Shindler**,
Website Administrator

Limmud FSU Sponsors and Funders

So many people - our partners, our sponsors, our donors, and our friends - have generously contributed to the accomplishments and global success of Limmud FSU over the past seven years. We thank you.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matthew Bronfman Aaron Frenkel Conference for Jewish Material Claims against Germany American-Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Diane Wohl Family Foundation Dr. Nona International Jewish National Fund (KKL) Ministry of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Prime Minister's Office - Nativ Jewish Agency for Israel All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress Cahn Family Foundation Chester Foundation Covenant Foundation David Kislin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund Eugene Grant European Jewish Union Euro-Asian Jewish Congress Feliks Frankel Ikea Israel Israel Bonds Israel Discount Bank Jerry Levin Joe Cooper Keren Hayesod (United Israel Appeal) L. A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora Mark Tsesarsky Mark Wilf Menachem Begin Heritage Center, Jerusalem Michael Zurakhinsky Mikhail Mirlashvili Ministry of Immigrant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absorption Richard Maidman Ron Hersh Ruben Landsberger Ruth and Menachem Oren Ruth Salomy Salarc Foundation Samuel Bronfman Foundation United Jewish Communities of Ukraine UJA - Federation of Greater Toronto UJA - Federation of New York |
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We welcome your involvement and hope you'll join us for Limmud FSU conferences and festivals in 2014. To learn more about Limmud FSU, please contact Sandra Cahn at sandycahn@aol.com or call her at 2-877-8321.

Limmud FSU's Community Online

Each Limmud FSU community has developed a local web site, featuring local programming, news, and activities.

- Belarus**
www.limmud.by/en
- Canada**
www.limmudfsucanada.org
- Moldova**
www.jcm.md
- Moscow**
www.limmud.ru
- New York**
www.limmudfsuus.org
- St. Petersburg**
www.limmud.spb.ru
- Ukraine**
www.limmud.org.ua
(English version: en.limmud.org.ua)

Limmud FSU Canada - Welcome



“This coming out of the Russian-Jewish community and Limmud – it’s almost magical. B’sheret. Destiny.”

“It was a very authentic and genuine weekend.”

These were just some of the comments heard around the room as the planning retreat for the first ever Limmud FSU Canada wrapped up in early January. Ten months still to go until the conference, but the planning committee was already clear on one point – their sense of Russian-Jewish identity and community had undergone a

profound transformation.

And that’s in large part because of the very process itself – a weekend retreat where gabbush and emotional connections were high on the agenda. Many of the 25-odd participants had never met before the two-night retreat at a resort just outside Toronto, Canada, but by the second night – at a Soviet artifacts and stories workshop, led by Project Okna out of New York – comments like “It’s frightening how similar we are to each other. The same experiences.

The same stories,” were getting emphatic nods from around the room.

It is a hopeful sign of things to come during the conference itself, which is set to take place in Deerhurst, also outside Toronto, from October 24-26, 2014.

As one participant put it in the retreat wrap-up, “Limmud is about the journey – the process – and not just the conference itself.” That journey is off to a fine start already.

Introducing New Faces



Yan Birbraer

Limmud FSU Israel Project Manager

In addition to his present responsibilities as overall Limmud FSU Logistics Manager, Yan has been appointed Limmud FSU Israel, Project Manager. Born in Kharkov, Ukraine, Yan immigrated to Israel with his family to Israel in 1993. Trained as a classical clarinetist, he served in the Israel Defense Forces as a “Talented Musician.”

Following his army service, in 2000, Yan began to work as a coordinator of activities in the Department of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI). Beginning in 2009, Yan joined us to produce Limmud FSU festivals in Israel, including the one just completed in Kiryat Moriah, Jerusalem. Since in 2011, he has had overall logistic responsibility for presenters and volunteers at Limmud FSU events overseas as well.

Yan replaces Vika Elkin who was Limmud FSU Israel project manager for the past 5 years. We thank Vika for her years of service and extend our best wishes for her continuing success.



Noam Shumakh - Khaimov

Limmud FSU USA Project Manager

Originally from Donetsk, Ukraine, Noam spent several years in Israel working in the informal Jewish education. In Israel, she was a program coordinator for the Israel Experience Birthright and served as a Jewish educator in Ta’ir, developing and leading Jewish education workshops for Israeli high school students.

Noam came to United States in November, 2008 as an emissary for Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI). Fluent in Russian, Hebrew, and English, Noam believes Limmud FSU is the great platform for Russian Jewish communities to explore and come together for a multidimensional Jewish learning experience. She said, “I’m very excited to join the team and be part of the organizing process as the Limmud FSU project manager in New York.”

Noam replaces Ilya Bratman who served as the New York area’s project manager for the past two years. We wish Ilya the best of luck in his new position as director of Hillel at Baruch College.



Mila Voihanski

Limmud FSU Canada, Country Director

Originally from Lvov, Ukraine, Mila’s family moved to Toronto, Canada in 1974.

Mila earned a Bachelor of Social Work at York University in Toronto and then a Master of Social Work at Wurzweiler School of Social Work in New York. She rose through the ranks at Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS) to become a team supervisor, then executive director of JIAS Toronto, and then CEO of JIAS Canada.

Mila initiated numerous settlement, integration and community development projects for immigrants of all ages. Her expert knowledge and professionalism are widely recognized, and her advice and assistance are sought by community organizations.

The spark of Jewish commitment lit by her family in Lvov has continued to burn brightly and has grown over the years as Mila has dedicated her life to helping immigrants make their dreams come true! Mila explains, “I am very excited about working at Limmud FSU to revitalize and rebuild the link with Jewish culture.”