

# *If Not Now, When?* (Victoria and Vancouver Island) – Mission, Principles & Structure

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## *If Not Now, When:* Mission Statement

We are Jews rooted in the ethos of *tikkun olam*—repair of the world—committed to the equal rights of Jews, Palestinians, and all the diverse communities in Israel/Palestine. We stand together against all forms of discrimination, including antisemitism, Islamophobia, and

anti-Palestinian racism. We seek to promote a vision of the future in which Jews and Palestinians can thrive with security, equal rights, and self-determination in their shared land.

## INNW Statement of Principles

### 1. Commitment to Co-Existence

We believe in the urgent need for peaceful co-existence between Palestinians and Jews, built on mutual recognition of each other's right to self-determination, security, and dignity. True peace—the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם), derives from 'wholeness'—demands an honest reckoning with the specific histories and power imbalances that have defined this conflict. Only by acknowledging these painful realities can we lay the groundwork for a just and enduring resolution.

### 2. Promotion of Human Rights

We believe in the universal application of human rights, rooted in the Jewish values of *b'tzelem elohim* (בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים)—understood by both secular and religious Jews as a reference to the inherent dignity of all people—and *tzedek* (צְדָקָה), which calls for justice grounded in fairness and righteousness. In Jewish tradition, *tzedek* goes beyond legal justice, emphasizing the moral imperative to act justly toward the vulnerable. Upholding universal human rights for all, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religion, is essential to advocating for both Israelis and Palestinians.

### 3. Opposition to Occupation

We oppose the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories, recognizing it as a fundamental barrier to peace, justice, and equality. Rooted in Jewish principles of *derech eretz* (דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ), ethical conduct or respectfulness as the proper "way of the land," we believe that ending the occupation is essential to ensuring the dignity, security, and self-determination of both Israelis and Palestinians. Peace can only be achieved when the rights of all people in the land are upheld.

### 4. Opposition to Violence

We oppose violence as a means to resolve conflict, guided by the Jewish principle of *pikuach nefesh* (פְּקֻיַח נֶפֶשׁ), the sanctity of human life, which teaches that respect for life is the most enduring path to reconciliation. While we recognize the right to self-defense when necessary, it must always be proportionate and aimed solely at protecting lives, not retaliation, which merely perpetuates the cycle of violence. In the long run, true peace can only be achieved through non-violent methods that honour the sanctity of life.

## 5. Condemnation of Discrimination

We stand against all forms of bigotry and discrimination, rooted in the Jewish ethical teachings of *ahavat ger* (אַהֲבַת גֵּר), love for the stranger, and *lo ta'amod al dam re'echa* (לֹא תֵעָמֵד עַל דַּם רֵעֲךָ), the prohibition against bystanding at the suffering of one's neighbour. We unequivocally oppose antisemitism in all its forms, recognizing it as a persistent and dangerous threat to Jews and Jewish communities worldwide. Similarly, we reject anti-Palestinian racism, Islamophobia, and all other forms of hatred, upholding the Jewish responsibility to act with justice and compassion toward all.

## INNW Strategies

We seek to live out our principles of (1) commitment to co-existence, (2) promotion of human rights, (3) opposition to occupation, (4) opposition to violence, and (5) condemnation of discrimination through these strategies:

### 1. Direct Action

We engage in nonviolent direct action in alignment with our principles outlined above.

### 2. Advocacy for Canadian Leadership

We advocate for Canadians, Canadian Jewish organisations, and the Canadian government to take a proactive role in promoting international law, ending occupation, and supporting efforts towards a negotiated settlement in Israel/Palestine.

### 3. Education and Awareness

We are committed to educating our members and the public on the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to promote informed and compassionate advocacy of our principles.

### 4. Dialogue and Engagement

We promote open, respectful dialogue within Jewish communities and with Palestinian, Arab, and other groups in the diaspora in support of our principles.

### 5. Modeling Co-Existence

We strive to model—and not just preach—respect, compassion, dialogue, co-existence and mutual aid among ourselves as well as among those with differing perspectives.

# INNW Structure & Decision-Making Process

- **Membership**
  - Membership is defined as individuals who actively participate in discussions and activities on the internal discussion list. We plan to institute an annual membership status for those who agree in writing to support the group's mission (no dues required)
  - Eligibility: open to Jews who reside in British Columbia and who support the group's mission
  - Expectations: Regular participation in meetings or online discussions, and contribution to group activities
  
- **Leadership**
  - Form a core group of 5 committed members who volunteer to take on coordination roles. Possible structure:
    - Chair/Coordinator: Leads the group, facilitates meetings, and represents the group externally.
    - Vice-Chair/Co-Coordinator: Supports the Chair and steps in when the Chair is unavailable; serves as secretary in taking meeting minutes and keeping records.
  - Rotate leadership roles annually to ensure fresh perspectives
  - Allow members to nominate themselves or others for leadership positions
  
- **Communication**
  - Create a separate public-facing announcement list for broader announcements and discussions
  - Continue with a private email list for internal communications, discussion and education (better forum technology may be implemented)
  - Restrict the private email list to members who have pledged to uphold the group's principles
  - More in-person meetings and possibly a regular meeting schedule
  
- **Finances**
  - Operate on a volunteer basis
  - Consider a voluntary donation system for specific projects or expenses
  - Elect a volunteer treasurer
  
- **Decision making**
  - For group policy decision-making

- Draft by leadership, circulate to all members for feedback
  - Implement a 72-hour (3-day) review period for member input
  - If no consensus can be reached, approval may be given by supermajority (75%) vote of voting members or attending members at a pre-announced general meeting.
- For website content and public statements:
  - Draft by leadership, circulate to all members for feedback
  - Implement a 48-hour review period for member input
  - Final approval by consensus of the leadership group
- For activities and initiatives:
  - Any member can propose an activity
  - Discuss proposals in general meetings or by email
  - Attempt to achieve consensus by email discussion and/or meeting discussion
  - If conflict persists, appoint subcommittee to recommend a decision
  - If no consensus can be reached, approval may be given by supermajority (75%) vote of voting list members or attending members at a general meeting.
- **Conflict resolution**
  - Encourage open dialogue within subcommittees and on the INNW list
  - For persistent conflicts, form a temporary committee of members to mediate
  - In extreme cases, consider bringing in an external mediator from a similar organization

## INNW Guidelines for Interaction

### Preservation of Group Culture, especially in virtual spaces

#### 1. “Scroll on by”

We welcome debate, but you won’t agree with everyone in the group. It’s okay to choose not to respond to perspectives you disagree with or to agree to disagree. You don’t need to comment on everything.

#### 2. Strive for a “safe enough” space

Disagreement and debate are intrinsic to our discussions. Israel/Palestine is a deeply personal and heated topic, and emotions can run high. However, we are committed to creating a “safe enough” space for everyone, from long-time activists to those

questioning core beliefs for the first time. Expect your views to be challenged, but personal attacks are never acceptable.

**3. No callout culture**

We reject callout or shaming culture and will not accept personal attacks. Group emails are not the place for lashing out.

**4. Take collective responsibility for the culture**

Reflect on how your behavior affects the group and help uphold our values of respect, care, and dialogue.

**5. Diversity in our shared mission**

While members may hold different perspectives within the scope of this mission, all are welcome to engage in respectful dialogue. If views fall outside our mission, we encourage open, constructive guidance toward communities that may be a better fit. At the same time, members are reminded to honour the diversity of thought within the group and are welcome to refrain from engaging in every disagreement, unless the group's core principles are being challenged.

**6. Leadership response to violations**

Leadership will address violations of these principles with care and understanding, such as reaching out for a personal conversation, while remaining firm in upholding the group's standards. Our goal is to foster growth and resolve conflicts constructively. However, repeated or serious violations will be handled appropriately, including possible suspension, to maintain a respectful and inclusive environment. If asked to step away from the group due to a violation of principles, you will be warmly welcomed back after a designated period.