



REPORT ON 2015 WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Submitted by the World Interfaith Harmony Week Toronto Steering Committee

TORONTO, CANADA REPORT

Toronto celebrated World Interfaith Harmony Week for the third year recently, and our Steering Committee is proud to announce that it surpassed expectations once again.

When we first met in October 2012, our thought was that we might only be able to gain some publicity and create awareness. We far exceeded our expectations. We were able to create and widen awareness of World Interfaith Harmony Week within the GTA by 1) creating a website, 2) an email campaign to known members of our local interfaith community, 3) media promotion and 4) having the City of Toronto officially proclaim it in Toronto. We were also able to help plan, conceptualize, facilitate and co-ordinate two events. The opening evening saw us “Celebrating Interfaith Culture”, hosted by The Islamic Supreme Council of Canada while the closing evening saw us bring together faith leaders from 10 different faiths at the Japanese Cultural Centre with our co-hosts, the Toronto Area Interfaith Council. These faith leaders spoke briefly about their faith and, in line with our local theme for the week Finding Ways To Work Together, they offered up ways we could all work together.

For 2014 World Interfaith Harmony Week, we set Stories That Move Us as a theme, and once again promoted the week to the interfaith community, media and via our website, and again had The City Of Toronto officially recognize the week via a proclamation. We also created an official newsletter and a Facebook page to publicize the week and its events and show what we did in pictures. The number of events we were able to help envision, plan, organize and co-ordinate grew to 5 as the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada repeated its opening event, Celebrating Interfaith Culture, The Steering Committee organized an evening of choir music and Nasrudin stories, a local Spiritual Dialogue Circle hosted an evening of Listening and Learning, Scarboro Missions presented Milestones in Recent Catholic Jewish Relations, and Noor Cultural Centre and our Steering Committee hosted an evening of Storytelling by GTA Interfaith Groups.

Given the awareness we created and based on our results and experience, our Steering Committee was seen as the local driving force for this week, and we began to be approached by others who wanted to be involved in creating and hosting events.

World Interfaith Harmony Week 2015 in Toronto grew to 8 events that spanned the week.

FEBRUARY 1 LAUNCH EVENT



February 1 saw a launch event hosted by The Sayeda Khadijah Centre and the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada, and featured a halal meal, presentations, a whirling dervish performance, and round table discussions, one of which has resulted in the striking of an interfaith committee to organize camp space and time for Muslim youth.

FEBRUARY 2 INTERFAITH DIALOGUE CIRCLE

On Monday February 2, Toronto's Spiritual Dialogue Circle hosted Harmony In Action, an evening that offered participants the opportunity to learn and to each share their own experiences of interfaith Harmony In Action

FEBRUARY 3 HOW WE TALK TO GOD

On Tuesday February 3, Intercultural Dialogue Institute organized an evening to share How We Talk To God. The evening featured a vegetarian meal, a multi-faith art display, and a panel discussion featuring prayer experiences from diverse faith traditions.



FEBRUARY 3 RACE AND RELIGION

Tuesday also saw the University of Toronto Multi Faith Centre host a Race and Religion luncheon intended to allow participants to engage in a stimulating dialogue regarding the intersection and racialized and religious identities.

FEBRUARY 4 FAITH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

On Wednesday evening the Hindu Campus Ministry held a religious service at the Multi-Faith Centre, University of Toronto where people had the opportunity to discuss something unique about the way worship is done in their respective Faith Tradition.

FEBRUARY 5 CHRISTIAN-JEWISH DIALOGUE

On Thursday February 5 Scarboro Missions repeated a 2014 event, Modern Milestones in Recent Catholic Jewish Relations. The event was once again scheduled because this being Toronto and Canada and wintertime, last year's event saw a massive snowstorm interfere with attendance.



FEBRUARY 7 AN EVENING OF INTERFAITH PERFORMING ARTS

On Saturday February 7, the Steering Committee and Noor Cultural Centre hosted an evening of Interfaith Performing Arts that brought 12 different groups and individuals together to perform music, dance, rhythms and magic tricks. In addition, the Steering committee initiated a plan to bring together and fund an interfaith youth group's volunteer work at a Habitat for Humanity Restore.



FEBRUARY 8 INTERFAITH ECOLOGY HIKE

The week closed with an Afternoon Hike Through Rouge Valley National Urban Park that underscored that each religion and spiritual philosophy has a long-standing tradition of ecological stewardship. The Green Rules were shared and reflected upon during the walk so that each participant could feel their connection to nature, and the importance of "Doing onto the Earth as you would have it do onto you"

EFFORTS TO OBTAIN GOVERNMENT OF CANADA SUPPORT

One more activity of note, one that is currently in the works, is having the Government of Canada officially designate the first week of February as Interfaith Harmony Week in Canada. To that end, our committee successfully lobbied to have the required legislation sponsored by the Liberal Party of Canada. They have prepared a Notice of Motion that will be moved and seconded by The Hon John McCallum and The Hon John McKay, and which has been presented to the Canadian Parliament as Motion Number M560. We fully expect that it will be passed in time for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016

Links to more Toronto pictures and information about what we organized and accomplished with our partners and interfaith colleagues

World Interfaith Harmony Week Toronto Steering Committee Sites

www.interfaithtoronto.ca/EventsCalendar.html www.facebook.com/worldinterfaithharmonyweektoronto

Intercultural Dialogue Institute Toronto Sites

www.toronto.interculturaldialog.com/interfaith-dinner-panel-how-we-talk-to-god/

www.facebook.com/IDIToronto

www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIDFZspgPie4BVBRilrIpcTgEcpv-B5Rw

Scarboro Missions Site

www.scarboromissions.ca/Photo_gallery/index.php?eventid=51

www.interfaithtoronto.ca

www.facebook.com/worldinterfaithharmonyweektoronto

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