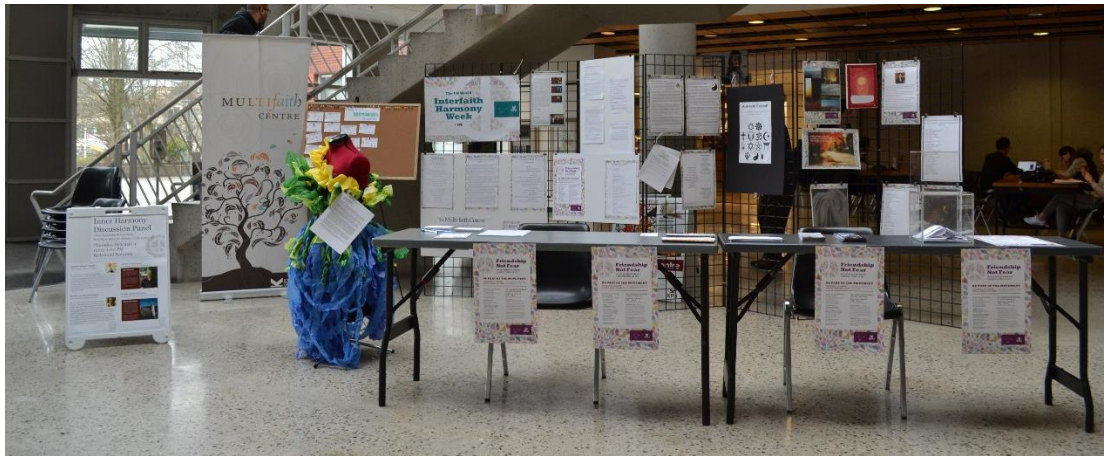


UN Interfaith Harmony Week Festival at Kwantlen Polytechnic University

According to the 2012 Pew Research Study, religious hostility has reached a six-year high. Over 60 countries worldwide have seen the level of social hostility rise to “high” or “very high” levels.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) wants to be part of the solution. From February 2 - 4, 2016, in concert with the United Nations World Interfaith and Harmony Week, KPU's Multi-Faith Centre was honored to host its 2nd Annual World Interfaith Harmony Week Festival at both its Richmond, BC and Surrey, BC campuses.



An open invitation was extended to local communities for this festival of multimedia art and guest speakers, guided by our theme of *friendship, not fear*. In keeping with King Abdullah II of Jordan's efforts to promote a world-wide UN designated week for religious and secular understanding, respect and cooperation, KPU's event featured expressions of friendship from numerous faith and spiritual backgrounds.

More than a dozen multimedia submissions were complemented by a range of programming including a musical performance by the Compassionate Winds' Susan Katz and Michel Vles; a panel discussion on *inner harmony* with guest speakers Rev. Gary Roosma (Christian Prayer), Babeeta Chhabra (Yoga and Meditation), Dr. Lorraine Bennington (Mindfulness) and Dr. Marty Shoemaker, Psychologist and Humanist Chaplain, (Science and Inner Harmony); and a talk on Syrian interfaith traditions and contemporary challenges delivered by Rahim Othman of the Syrian Canadian Council of BC.

Additionally, the KPU community was challenged to commit *harmonious resolutions*, to be completed over the calendar year, honoring the festival theme and engaging in learning about or dialoguing with a person from another faith or belief system. 18 cards were received with pledges such as: Visit a different belief event; honor and pray for religious tolerance; promote social justice at KPU; and research ways for how to use technology to produce more understanding.



The festival concluded with a ceremony in recognition of all who participated.

Testimonials

My experience with the UN Interfaith Harmony Week has been inspiring and splendid. I wish I knew about the Interfaith Harmony Week a couple of years ago so I could have taken part in many events in the community. I was very satisfied with the outcome because I met many individuals with different worldviews than my own. I find that interfaith events give individuals an opportunity to learn and expose themselves to worldviews that are different than their own. This is a great opportunity to ask questions, socialize, build friendships, and network with individuals regardless of gender, age ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. I look forward to attending various interfaith events in the future during Interfaith Harmony Week in the years to come!

- Parabjot K. Singh

I am very happy to have participated in the 2015 and 2016 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week at KPU, which allowed me to display my poetry in a free and creative way. I couldn't have imagined a better way to portray in my poems than through the message of the UN World Interfaith event that speaks dearly and deeply to me. These past two years have been a great opportunity to be part of something greater than ourselves, and provide the chance to bring people together in an attempt for a harmonious life between different cultures and religions.

- Lilia Chong

About the KPU Multi-Faith Centre

The KPU Multi-Faith Centre (MFC) is now in its 5th year providing students, faculty and staff an open door, open mind and an open heart of spiritual and secular care and advocacy. Our foundation is respect for all religious and secular world views which promote thoughtful and virtuous living. We also provide a space of solace and sanctuary for prayer and meditation for the KPU community.

Besides the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, the MFC provides opportunities to dialogue through book clubs, open mic forums and short talks. Of our eight chaplains, whom represent an array of faith and secular groups, several are involved in on-campus club events, projects and guidance, helping guide students along their journey at KPU.

For more information, visit us at kpu.ca/multifaith

Festival Gallery

