

---

# 2017 World Interfaith Harmony Week Summary

**Submitted by the Surrey Interfaith Council**

The Surrey Interfaith Council has organized World Interfaith Harmony Week events in the City of Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, every year since the inception of World Interfaith Harmony Week. Each year, our group has expanded programming and built capacity for greater outreach and engagement.

This year we were confronted with a number of unexpected situations: record breaking snowfall throughout the week, the raise of divisive political rhetoric from the American administration to the south, and the January 29 mass shooting at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City, Canada.

These challenges affected our programming in various ways. The record breaking snowfall necessitated the modification or rescheduling of a number of events, but also opened up opportunities for impromptu connections as you will read in the story about Arun's community coffee.

The mass shooting in Quebec and divisive political rhetoric from the U.S. were an affront to our vision of peace, inclusion and understanding, but also created opportunities for us to expand our message and collective strength as you will read in the description of the "Inclusive Cafe" dialogue and vigil.

Despite the challenges, we are proud of our collective accomplishments this year, and we are eager to share our ideas with the global interfaith community.

The following is a summary of World Interfaith Harmony Week events that took place in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada.

## **Lead up to World Interfaith Harmony Week**

This year, in the week leading up to World Interfaith Harmony Week, we increased our outreach and engagement strategy to raise awareness and create more interest in the upcoming WIHW events.

### **Letter of Support for World Interfaith Harmony Week**

We began our preparations for WIHW 2017 by submitting a Letter of Support to the UN World Interfaith Harmony website. The letter can be viewed on the WIHW website [here](#), and on the Surrey Interfaith website [here](#).

### **Proclamation of "World Interfaith Harmony Week" by the City of Surrey**

This year, for the first time, the City of Surrey officially proclaimed World Interfaith Harmony Week in Surrey. You can read the proclamation [here](#).

### **Letter from the Mayor of the City of White Rock**

This year, for the first time, the neighbouring City of White Rock offered a letter of support for World Interfaith Harmony Week in general, and the “Interfaith Music and Spoken Word” Concert specifically. You can read the letter [here](#).

### **Letters of Support and Solidarity for Muslim Friends and Neighbours**

On January 29, a mass shooting occurred at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City, Canada. In the days that follow, the Surrey Interfaith Council collected message of support from the community, and delivered them to the Surrey Jamea Masjid. See [here](#) for a selection of those messages, as well as a letter of response from the Masjid.

## **Feature Events**

### **Interfaith Display at Surrey City Center Library**

This year, for the first time, Surrey City Centre Library set up a World Interfaith Harmony Week display of books about the diverse religious, spiritual and secular traditions in our community. The display was up for two weeks and was well received.

### **Public Installation of Interfaith Artwork “Letters from Beyond: A Spiritual Journey”**

“Letters from Beyond: A Spiritual Journey” is an interfaith installation piece by local artist Deborah Putman. This year, the installation was on display in the Aboriginal Gathering Space at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. In the words of the artist: “The artwork consists of nine suspended scrolls circling a labyrinth. The painted scrolls embody the plurality of world faiths while revealing common values. A contemporary interpretation of a three channel ancient labyrinth leads your footsteps to the centre of a personal journey.” See pictures and media coverage of the installation [here](#).

### **Interfaith Dinner Series**

This year we expanded our interfaith dinner series to four well attended dinners. For this initiative, people from different faith traditions sign up to host and/or participate as a guest. The series coordinator matches hosts and guests so that each dinner is attended by representatives from a diversity of religious, spiritual and secular backgrounds. These dinners provide an intimate, small group setting for people to build understanding, trust and friendship.

### **Interfaith Harmony Week Devotional Gathering**

An open, evening Interfaith Harmony Week Devotional Gathering invited the community to experience “Love of God, or, ‘the Good’ & love of the Neighbour.” The event created a safe space to experience with the heart the oneness and unity of humanity and pray and meditate together. Organizers invited participants to: “inhale the heavenly fragrances, experience the sweetness of prayer, meditate upon the Creative Word, be transported on the wings of the spirit, and commune with the one Beloved.”

### **Interfaith Conference**

The theme of this year's Interfaith conference was "How Can Interfaith Communication Enhance Harmony?" Leaders from local religious communities shared perspectives from their traditions, and the talks will be followed by devotional music and round table discussion. See [here](#) for event summary and pictures.

### **Interfaith Music and Spoken Word Concert**

The Interfaith Music and Spoken Word Concert was a celebration of Surrey's diverse sacred music traditions. See [here](#) for event summary and pictures.

### **Interfaith Food and Clothing Ministry Event**

The Interfaith Food and Clothing Ministry serves food to homeless and marginalized communities on the first, third and fifth Saturdays of the month. On the Saturday of World Interfaith Harmony week, we honour the work of the Interfaith Food and Clothing Ministry as a shining example of the power of interfaith cooperation. Learn more about the Interfaith Food and Clothing Ministry [here](#).

### **Surrey Interfaith Pilgrimage**

The Surrey Interfaith Pilgrimage was cancelled this year due to record breaking snow fall. But despite the official cancellation of the event, a number of organizers drive from venue to venue to connect with and honour the work that each of the participating faith communities had put into organizing for this events. The modified event allowed for more time at the Surrey Jamea Masjid, where we were able to drop off letters of support and solidarity to our Muslim friends and neighbours. See [here](#) for summary and pictures of the modified pilgrimage.

### **Sharing Our Stories**

The Multifaith Centre at Kwantlen Polytechnic University did a wonderful job of bringing World Interfaith Harmony Week to student at the University this year. In the weeks leading up to World Interfaith Harmony Week, organizers collected poetry, art, music, and other creative expressions on the theme of *Stories that Build Bridges*. Submissions were put on display at the University.

Organizers at the Multifaith Centre had planned for a larger public event to conclude the week on campus, but that event had to be cancelled due to snow. Learn about KPU's World Interfaith Harmony Week events [here](#).

## **Follow-up and Incidental Events**

### **Arun's Community Coffee Event**

On a day during World Interfaith Harmony Week, one of our members was involved in a minor car accident as a result of the massive snowfall. He was struck by the generosity and kindness of people that stopped to help him out. In a letter published by Peace Arch News, Arun expressed his gratitude to those that helped him on the roadside, and to everyone that works to make our community a better place. He also offered to buy everyone a free coffee! See [here](#) for Arun's letter and a description of the gathering that followed.

## **Surrey Vigil for Victims of Mosque Shooting**

A number of members of the Surrey Interfaith council were involved in the organizing and implementation of a public vigil for the victims of the Quebec City shooting. The vigil engaged a number of interfaith speakers, politicians and community leaders. See [here](#) for lead-up coverage of the vigil.

## **“Inclusive Cafe” on Travel Ban**

During World Interfaith Harmony Week, our community was coming to grips with the mass shooting in Quebec and divisive political rhetoric from the U.S., we were connected by a number of other community organization wanting to partner on events and initiatives. One event that arose from these connections was an public “Inclusive Cafe” on the topic of “Travel Ban in the U.S. How does it affect all of us?” See details of the event [here](#), and media coverage of the event [here](#).

For more information on this submission, please contact:

David Dalley, Convenor  
Surrey Interfaith Council  
[david@surreyinterfaith.ca](mailto:david@surreyinterfaith.ca)  
(778) 988-3549



[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Newsletter](#)