**2016 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. 2016 was our most successful World Interfaith Harmony Week to date. We offered more diverse programs, events and projects, and we engaged a larger number of people in building interfaith relationships in our community.

We are excited about what we have achieved this year, and we are eager to share our ideas with the global interfaith community.

**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**

We began our preparations for WIHW 2016 by submitting a Letter of Support to the UN World Interfaith Harmony website. The letter can be viewed on the WIHW website [here](http://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com/4286/letters-of-support/406-scott-reynolds/), and on the Surrey Interfaith website [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/world-interfaith-harmony-week-letter-of-support/).

**Inclusive City Cafes – Honouring Diverse Beliefs**

This open, community “café” was hosted in partnership with Simon Fraser University and our Local Immigrant Partnership coalition. It was facilitated by a member of the Surrey Interfaith Council. Participants were invited to consider the following question: “Religious belief can be a source of both good and evil actions. In Canadian society, religious beliefs continue to have an enormous influence on the behaviour of individuals and communities, yet we seem reluctant to talk about religion in public. How might we instead have conversations that acknowledge our differences in belief, while at the same time encouraging us to work together for a better community?” Learn more [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/inclusive-city-cafes-honouring-diverse-beliefs/).

**Regional Outreach and Engagement**

We began the week by sending messages of support and solidarity to other interfaith groups active in the Greater Vancouver, Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley Region. Throughout WIHW, members of the Surrey Interfaith Council attended interfaith events in neighbouring areas to support events and bring messages of support and solidarity from the Surrey Interfaith Council. In addition to promoting interfaith cooperation in Surrey, the Surrey Interfaith Council also supports regional growth of interfaith activity.

**Events Held During World Interfaith Harmony Week**

**Interfaith Art Display**

“Letters from Beyond: A Spiritual Journey” is an interfaith installation art work created by Surrey artist [Deborah Putman](http://www.deborahputman.com/) . The artwork was on display at Northwood United Church for the duration of WIHW 2016. Read more about the artwork and the artist statement [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/letters-from-beyond-on-display-at-northwood-united-church/).

**Interfaith Food Ministry**

The Interfaith Food Ministry team served an amazing community meal as part of 2016 World Interfaith Harmony Week. This event was part of an ongoing community-led “Interfaith Bi-Weekly Food Ministry” that has been serving food and providing clothing every second Saturday for the past four years to people who are homeless in the Whalley neighbourhood of Surrey. The nutritious meals are home cooked by members of the group. Pictures have been submitted separately, and you can learn more [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/interfaith-food-ministry/).

**Interfaith Dinners**

This year the Surrey Interfaith Council piloted an “Interfaith Dinner” project. Participants were invited to submit an offer to host a dinner in their house, or to attend a dinner in someone else’s house. A coordinator matched up “host” and “guest” requests so that people from different religious and spiritual backgrounds were placed together. The pilot program was very successful and we intend to expand the program next year. You can read more about one dinner evening [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/interfaith-dinners/).

**Interfaith Panel**

A coalition of different regional interfaith groups hosted an Interfaith Panel Discussion on the theme of “Navigating Peace through Faith.” The event included speakers from ten different faith backgrounds. You can read more about the event [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/2016-world-interfaith-harmony-week-interfaith-panel/). Pictures have been submitted separately.

**Celebration of Twentieth Anniversary of “Religious Horizons”**

“Religious Horizons” first aired on Rogers TV in 1995-1996. This series of interviews was produced by Surrey Interfaith Council member and President of the Kabir Association of Canada, Dr. Jagessar Das. The series explores the beliefs of twelve different world religions: The Bahá’í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, the Kabir Path, Sikhism, Taoism, Unitarianism and Zoroastrianism. The series is dedicated to all people interested in promoting interfaith harmony. It played an important role in building establishing the interfaith networks in the Surrey and Great Vancouver region. To mark the twentieth anniversary of this important project, we posted the video online and on our website [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/resources/religious-horizons/). The Council is planning a social get together later this year to honour Dr. Das and his work.

**Interfaith Garden**

Plans for an Interfaith Garden emerged out of the connections that arose during World Interfaith Harmony Week. Since that time, a working group formed and the garden has begun. The initial layout of the garden is based on the medicine wheel, a sacred design in the spiritual tradition of the Aboriginal people of this region. The design is being guided by a local First Nations elder. The group is in the process of engaging other faith communities in the neighbourhood to participate in the project. You can see pictures and more information [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/interfaith-gardening/).

**Surrey Interfaith Pilgrimage**

2016 WIHW in Surrey wrapped up with our flagship event, the Surrey Interfaith Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage involved a 16km walk across Surrey, stopping along the way at various houses of worship including the Thien Ton Buddhist Temple, Northwood United Church, Laxmi Narayana Hindu Mandir, Canadian Singh Sabha Sikh Gurdwara, Surrey Jamea Muslim Masjid, and Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara. You can see a summary of the event [here](http://www.surreyinterfaith.ca/2016-surrey-interfaith-pilgrimage-summary/).

**Media Coverage and Video Links provided separately**

**Pre-WIHH coverage:**

Scott Reynolds interviewed on JoyTV about upcoming WIHW events: <https://youtu.be/g2Ulhn597IA>

Peace Arch News Coverage of Pilgrimage: <http://www.peacearchnews.com/community/367687861.html>

Surrey 604: <http://surrey604.com/2016/01/19/eating-and-walking-praying-and-talking-diverse-celebrations-in-surrey-mark-united-nations-world-interfaith-harmony-week/>

Surrey Leader: <http://www.surreyleader.com/community/367687861.html>

**WIHW Events:**

Surrey Interfaith Pilgrimage Opening Ceremony at Thien Ton Buddhist Temple: <https://youtu.be/Ss1RvC3mtbw>

Surrey Interfaith Pilgrimage Opening Ceremony at Guru Nanak Gurdwara: <https://youtu.be/r7pP9zj6XGk>

**Post event coverage:**

Global TV coverage of the 2016 Surrey Interfaith Pilgrimage originally aired on February 2, 2016: <https://youtu.be/Fh91_1skXOw>

Surrey Leader, Letter to the Editor: <http://www.surreyleader.com/opinion/letters/353205261.html>

The Link Newspaper: <http://thelinkpaper.ca/?p=53242>

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