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For Immediate Release

Developing Leadership Qualities at Sidak 2013

Bridgewater, NJ—Sikh Research Institute welcomed 32 participants and over a dozen instructors and facilitators representing five countries to Sidak 2013. The eleventh year of the leadership development program was held in San Antonio, Texas, from 28 July through 10 August. The local sangat offered invaluable



support in organizing meals, activities and transportation. “It has been a privilege to be a part of an intense, highly structured learning environment,” said Shamsheer Singh, Sikhi 201 participant from England. “Without a doubt attending Sidak has been the highlight of my Sikhi education. The skills I have learned here will accompany me on my journey in delivering positive change and dialogue within my local community.”

Sidak participants enrolled in one of three tracks of study that their morning classroom sessions concentrate on: Sikhi 101 which focuses on Sikh theology, Sikhi 201 which focuses on Sikh history and contemporary issues, or Gurmukhi 101 which focuses on developing vocabulary and grammar skills to engage fully and personally with the Guru Granth Sahib.

In the afternoons, the participants came together for sessions on skills, techniques, and organizational tactics in leadership roles. As a compliment to the rigorous classroom sessions, the afternoon seminars are intended to provide an opportunity for participants as a group to share their experiences and aspirations and to apply some of their coursework in practice. “As someone who volunteers locally with Jakara, Sidak provides the reinforcement for me to continue to fight for a more inclusive, loving and just society,” said Jasdeep Singh, Sikhi 101 participant from California who returned for a second year to Sidak. “Utilizing history, gurbani and rehat we are provided a path to carry out these calls to reform society. I would highly suggest it to all aspiring leaders.”



Sidak is open to ages 17-40 which allows high school, college, graduate students, and professionals to come together for the two weeks and share ideas and advice. “I came to Sidak because I am going to college this fall and I wanted to be ready when I made that change,” said Avneet Kaur, Sikhi 101 participant from Massachusetts. “Now I can explain myself and I can talk about Sikhi with confidence.”

This year Sidakers spent an evening in downtown San Antonio soaking up the local culture and on 3 August, attendees and instructors joined the local San Antonio sangat for a 6K Walk/Run to commemorate the tragic shootings in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, one year earlier. Over the weekend of 2-4 August, Mandeep Singh Sethi, hip hop artist and youth worker, joined the Sidakers and led workshops on Hip Hop & Identity—encouraging participants to see language and rhyme as powerful teaching tools and to explore the cultural and economic connections of hip hop to movements of revolution and resistance.



Sidak requires a commitment of two weeks, and for many attendees this fosters an incredible sense of community with Sikhs from around the world and allows for a highly unique learning environment due to the intense amount of time spent with each other in class, during divans, at meals, and in discussions that often go late into the night. “Sidak has been amazing in that what I thought would be an intellectual journey turned out to be an incredible personal and spiritual journey,” said Iqbal Kaur, Sikhi 201 participant from Vancouver, BC. Surender Pal Singh, Lead Instructor for Gurmukhi 101, added that: “Sidak is a great space to come together as a sangat and learn through each other’s experiences which is further enhanced by the wide demographic representation from multiple continents.”

IJ Singh, member of SikhRI’s Board of Directors and an instructor at Sidak, spoke to the rich value of the Sidak experience: “Though I come nominally to teach at Sidak, I feel I am as much a student. The opportunity to learn from each other and to grow from this space where we share and discuss our experiences and our hopes for the panth around the world makes Sidak invaluable for leaders and learners year after year. SikhRI remains one of the very few institutions wholly dedicated to the internal development of the Sikh community.”

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