Press Release

For Immediate Release
01 October 2015
Bridgewater, New Jersey

The much awaited Gurdwara Governance program by the Sikh Research Institute (SikhRI) took off to a great start. The workshop was held on 26 September 2015 in Seattle, WA at Bellevue Community College.

The workshop was an absolute success. Visibly excited Harinder Singh, CEO, SikhRI remarked, "Inaugural session at Seattle exceeded ours’ and host’s expectations. The messages SikhRI received from across the globe are indicative on Panthak synergy waiting to get unleashed."

The Gurdwara Governance Program is a one day training session aimed at current and prospective Gurdwara boards, management, and decision makers. The training offers to make Gurdwara board individuals fully informed of their Panthak and legal responsibilities. The purpose of the program is to develop effective Gurdwara boards by empowering its members to govern
the Gurdvara in accordance with Gurmat (Guru’s Wisdom) principles, to be in compliance with legal standards, and follow the best practices guidelines for non-profits and charities.

Gurduaras in North America have wasted a huge amount of community money in court cases in the past. A tremendous loss of financial resource that could have been used for the betterment of the community and empowering its members.

Under these circumstance this program initiative is a landmark event not only in terms of its scope, nature, and potential, for what it proposes to remedy, but also how many different organizations and their representative came together collaboratively to participate in it. The first workshop witnessed 80+ trainees in attendance from the following organizations:

- Gurdvara Guru Nanak Darbar, Olympia, WA
- Gurdvara Sikh Centre of Seattle, Bothell, WA
- Gurdvara Singh Sabha of WA, Renton, WA
- Gurdvara Guru Nanak Gursikh Temple, Lynden, WA
- Gurdvara Guru Nanak Parkash, Pasco, WA
- Guru Ramdas Gurdvara, Vancouver, WA
- Gurdvara Sacha Marg Sahib, Auburn, WA
- Khalsa Gurmat Center, Renton, WA
- Sikhs of Washington, Renton, WA
- Dashmesh Singh Temple, Salem, OR
- Sikh Center of Oregon, Beaverton, OR

The workshop was co-facilitated by Harinder Singh, SikhRI, and Ramandeep Kaur Grewal, a practicing lawyer at Stikeman Elliott LLP one of Canada’s most prestigious business law firms that focuses on corporate governance and corporate finance. They ran training sessions on the following topics:

1. Basic Responsibilities of Boards
2. Gurdvara: Genesis & Purpose
3. Common Shortcomings & Robust Discussion for Boards
4. Key Financial Questions All Boards Should Ask

Balwant Singh, Gurdvara Sikh Centre of Seattle, Bothell, WA, shared his thoughts about the workshop. “After attending this workshop it felt like something jolted me with a reality. It made me aware of how to follow the [Panthak] principles while staying in the guidelines of local and federal jurisdiction. Our personal and corporation shortcomings are our own pillar of false evaluation and satisfaction. These [types] of sessions are the seed for a change. It not only makes us aware but also tools us with knowledge and needed format to accomplish the very change.”
Harbaksh Singh of Beaverton, OR remarked that this was a “very effective learning session and structure.” He also thought that “this is a well & highly needed [program] in North America today for steering the future of Gurdwara’s towards a more productive path.”

Co-facilitator Ramandeep Kaur writes, “I was inspired by the dedication and passion demonstrated by the attendees and how keen they were to become better Gurdwara administrators.”

With this program SikhRI hopes to turn a new chapter in Gurdwara Governance across North America, possibly across the globe in the future and make Gurdwaras truly a hub of Gurmat learning and community activism.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that our next Gurdwara Governance training session is scheduled for 12 December 2015 in Calgary, Canada. With it, we hope to connect with a host of new organizations and representatives, and together take another step in rediscovering our Panthak fervor.
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