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## **HALOONA PROJECT: Developing Consensus among the Sikhs**

TORONTO - Haloona Project Coordination Team recently hosted a Community Revival: Rekindling Sikh Spirit program at Sikh Spiritual Center, Rexdale from 2 to 7pm. The Sikh Research Institute (SikhRI), a Texas-based community development organization, was invited to facilitate two educational sessions held in this workshop organized for the Greater Toronto Area Sikh organizations.

According to Bhai Harjinder Singh, Haloona's coordinator, "the purpose was to present the information that positively affects the Sikh community by creating awareness about the issues facing the Panth."

In this particular workshop dedicated to the thought of unification of Panth, Eighty-five participants were engaged in discussing practical and realistic solutions to prevailing problems within the Sikh Nation. Because of their abilities to prioritize and actively improve the Sikh nation, Community Revival sought to draw together a variety of engaged community leaders, activists, professionals, and youth.

Bhai Inderpreet Singh, a workshop facilitator and a member of the SikhRI's Board of Advisors, explained that "Community Revival program exists to restore a deep sense of identity; the global Sikh community must keep alive the spirit of Sikh sovereignty and prosperity through an understanding and practice of the faith."

Throughout the sessions, attendees learned how the Sikh Rahit Maryada came about, its need and relevance to guide and shape individual and panthic Sikh behavior, and application of its institutions such as Sarbat Khalsa and Gurmata in today's context. Then, a model Sarbat Khalsa activity was conducted comprising of 8 Jathas of varying ideologies within the Panth. The task was to identify the three highest priorities facing the Sikh Nation. After three iterations, they were identified: Unification, Education, and Sovereignty. At a personal response front, each participant developed a goal that will be implemented within next two months to champion a task within the three aforesaid areas.

Gurdev Singh, a participant from Brampton, remarked: "It is a good program you introduced for the community: How to understand other factions who are also Sikh, but differ due to some of their own thinking. So, it is a good example of 'Sarbat Khalsa' ideology, which should be understood and implemented."

Gurpreet Singh, a participant from Mississauga, got highly impressed and commented: "Indeed it was very informative and effective. It is rare that we see such clarity and transparency in vision, action plan and execution."

Balwinder Singh, a Haloona team member, said that an important inspiration got from this event is, "Each Sikh should spend his time and money on common issues and positive efforts to strengthen the Panth."

"Our aim is to learn and share the intricacies of the sovereign elements of the Sikh culture that unified us as a collective. For more than 200 years, the Sikhs have been using un-Sikh-like processes for their decision making. It is time to re-ignite our spirit, develop the Guru-initiated processes, and strengthen our institutions for collective good", concluded Bhai Harinder Singh,



SikhRI's Executive Director and the chief workshop facilitator. Haloonaa team has already announced the next series of workshops for the Sikh-Canadians to be conducted on 9 Aug 2008 and the theme of these events will be, "Sevadar: Becoming an Inspiring Activist."

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