



GURU NANAK  
INSTITUTE  
OF GLOBAL STUDIES

THIRD ANNUAL

# International Sikh Research Summit

***“Global Impact and Contributions of Sikhs”***

SEPTEMBER 28 & 29, 2024 | IN PERSON & VIRTUAL | SURREY, B.C. CANADA



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Join us for a weekend of discovery and networking—explore the schedule and connect with the thought leaders behind the research and the summit!

<b>WELCOME MESSAGES</b>	<b>1 - 2</b>
<b>SUMMIT OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SUMMIT PLANNING COMMITTEE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>5 - 6</b>
<b>GREETINGS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DAY 1 WELCOME &amp; OPENING SPEAKERS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>DAY 2 WELCOME &amp; OPENING SPEAKERS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SUMMIT SPONSORS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SUMMIT DINNER AND DISTINGUISHED GUESTS</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>KEYNOTE SPEAKERS</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>DAY 1 PRESENTERS &amp; PANELISTS</b>	<b>12 - 17</b>
<b>DAY 2 PRESENTERS &amp; PANELISTS</b>	<b>18 - 21</b>
<b>ABOUT GURU NANAK INSTITUTE</b>	<b>22 - 23</b>
<b>GNI PROGRAMS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>GNI TEAM</b>	<b>25</b>

*We are grateful to host this Summit within the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Musqueam, Qayqayt, Tsleil Waututh, and Tsawwassen First Nations.*

**Please also take some time to enjoy the  
Sikh National Archives of Canada on display at the Summit.**

# WELCOME FROM OUR CO-CHAIRS

To GNI's third annual International Sikh Research Summit  
[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the International Sikh Research Summit 2024.

We are honoured to bring together a diverse group of scholars, researchers, and practitioners who are passionate about advancing the understanding and application of Sikhi in contemporary times.

This Summit serves as a unique platform to exchange ideas, foster collaboration, and showcase groundbreaking research that explores the rich heritage and dynamic future of the Sikh community. We are excited about the breadth of topics that will be covered in Summit 2024, from historical insights to contemporary challenges and from philosophical discourses to practical applications.

Our goal is to create an environment and platform that encourages intellectual curiosity, rigorous debate, and meaningful connections. We believe that the collective knowledge and expertise gathered here will not only enhance our academic pursuits but also contribute to the broader societal understanding of Sikh ethos and values.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our speakers, panelists, and attendees for their invaluable contributions. Your participation is what makes this summit a vibrant and impactful event. We are confident that the discussions and interactions during the summit will inspire new ideas and initiatives that will resonate beyond this gathering into your professional lives.

Thank you for joining us, and we look forward to an enriching and engaging summit.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh



Dr. Baljit Singh



Dr. Satpal Singh

*Academic Co-Chairs, GNI International Sikh Research Summit 2024*

# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)

On behalf of GNI's board of directors, I am delighted to warmly welcome all our esteemed guests, participants, and scholars attending the 3rd International Sikh Research Summit.



Your presence here today is of immense significance, as we gather to reflect on our shared heritage and engage in meaningful dialogue to advance our collective understanding of Sikh history, culture, and values.

Over 125 years ago, our forefathers embarked on a journey of hope and resilience, leaving Punjab to pursue a better life in Canada. They arrived on ships, including the Guru Nanak Jahaz (often mistakenly referred to as the Komagata Maru), bringing with them their belongings and the timeless teachings and values of Guru Nanak Sahib. Their journey was fraught with challenges, facing prejudice, exclusion, and policies designed to keep them out of the very country they sought to call home. Today, we honour and remember those brave souls, and we are deeply grateful for the sacrifices they made, which laid the foundation for the freedoms we now enjoy.

Despite these hardships, our forefathers persevered, upholding their faith and unwavering commitment to justice and equality. Their resilience has paved the way for future generations, instilling values of hard work, community service, and justice that continue to inspire us today.

As we gather for this summit, we also celebrate the progress of the Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies (GNI). Established just under three years ago, GNI has grown rapidly, reflecting our commitment to education and the pursuit of knowledge. Since our official approval in December 2021, we have launched six diploma and two certificate courses, with over 600 students enrolled. We are now on the verge of submitting an undergraduate degree proposal to the BC government, marking another significant milestone in our journey.

Research remains at the heart of our mission at GNI. We take pride in our 40 research scholars working to advance Sikh studies and contribute to the broader academic landscape. This summit, with its gathering of distinguished academics and scholars, reflects our ongoing dedication to this mission.

I encourage all participants to fully engage in the summit's discussions and activities. Let us make the most of this opportunity to share insights, foster connections, and contribute to the ongoing development of GNI. Let's embark on this journey together, embracing the spirit of learning, collaboration, and growth. Welcome, and here's to a future full of possibilities!

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.

*Gian Singh*

Gian Singh Sandhu

## SUMMIT OBJECTIVES

3rd Annual International Sikh Research Summit  
[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)

**The International Sikh Research Summit brings together thought leaders, experts and passionate scholars who have interest to:**

- Advance Sikh studies by creating a space for multi-disciplinary dialogue, learning, and exchange
- Facilitate a platform for global networking of Sikh scholars
- Highlight contributions of Sikhs in the areas of global food security and sustainability
- Advance the vision of Guru Nanak University in Canada

**The Board of Directors of the Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies welcomes you to our 2024 Summit!**



**Gurjot Kaur Bains**



**Harpreet Singh Dardi**



**Gian Singh Sandhu**



**Jaswinder Singh Parmar**



**Kamaljit Kaur Sidhu**

## SUMMIT PLANNING COMMITTEE

Meet the people behind this Summit.  
[www.gurunanakinstiute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstiute.ca)

**Gian Singh Sandhu**



**Summit Visionary**  
Surrey, BC, Canada

**Dr. Baljit Singh**



**Summit Co-Chair**  
Saskatoon, SK, Canada

**Dr. Satpal Singh**



**Summit Co-Chair**  
Buffalo, NY, USA

**Dr. Kamaljit Kaur Sidhu**



**Logistics Chair**  
Surrey, BC, Canada

**Amanpreet Singh Hundal**



**Logistics Assistant Chair**  
Kelowna, BC, Canada

**Neesha Kaur Hothi**



**Marketing & Logistics Assistant Chair**  
Burnaby, BC, Canada

**Kuwarjeet Singh Arora**



**Mandeep Singh**



**IT/Web Developer**  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

**Ramandeep Kaur**



**Planning Team**  
Surrey, BC, Canada

**Satveer Kaur Sidhu**



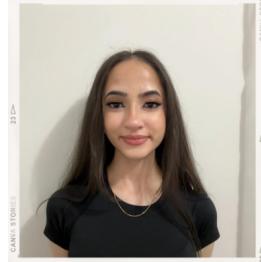
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**Simar Kaur Shoker**



**Intern**  
Surrey, BC, Canada

**Jasmine Kaur Sidhu**



**Intern**  
Surrey, BC, Canada

**Sukhvinder Kaur Sandhu**



**Hospitality Team Lead**  
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**Parminder Kaur Lalli**



**Hospitality Team**  
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**Kulwinder Kaur Dhaliwal**



**Hospitality Team**  
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**Nirmal Kaur Sidhu**



**Hospitality Team**  
Surrey, BC, Canada

# DAY 1 AGENDA

Saturday, September 28, 2024

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7:30am*	Registration & Continental Breakfast
8:30am	<p><b>Opening Remarks</b>  <i>Summit Co-Chair: Dr. Baljit Singh, VP Research, University of Saskatchewan, Canada</i></p>
9:00am	<p><b>Greetings</b>  <i>The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Canada, The Hon. Premier of British Columbia, &amp; the Mayor of Surrey, Canada</i></p>
10:00am	<p><b>Keynote: Building an Excellent University from Scratch</b>  <i>Dr. Alastair Summerlee, Former President &amp; Vice-Chancellor, University of Guelph &amp; Carleton University, Canada    Currently Adjunct Professor, Carleton University, Canada</i></p>
10:30am	<p>Break</p> <p><b>Panel: Internationalizing Higher Education: Challenges and Best Practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Victor Ramraj, Professor of Law &amp; Chair, Asia-Pacific Legal Relations, University of Victoria, Canada</li> <li>• Dr. Pooja Parmar, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Victoria, Canada</li> <li>• Tricia Best, Director, International Centre for Students, University of Victoria, Canada</li> <li>• Dr. Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra, Faculty, GNI Canada</li> <li>• Jaskaran Singh Benipal, Co-Founder, "We Care Canada", An International Student Organization</li> </ul>
12:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm	<p><b>Sikh Scientists' Contribution to Global Wheat Production</b>  <i>Dr. Kulvinder Singh Gill, Washington State University, USA</i></p> <p><b>Energy Sustainability in Built Environments: Path from Policies to Implementation</b>  <i>Dr. Kuljeet Singh Grewal, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada</i></p> <p><b>Food and Nutritional Security: Contributions by Sikh Researchers</b>  <i>Dr. Jaswinder Singh, McGill University, Canada</i></p>
	<p><b>Panel: Sikh Institutions' Contributions to Equitable Global Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chanpreet Kaur, President &amp; CEO, Sandhu Fruit Farm &amp; Mangal Capital, Canada</li> <li>• Maninder Singh Sandhu, Chief Operating Officer, Crown Nut Company Inc., USA</li> <li>• Dr. Kulvinder Singh Gill, Washington State University, USA</li> <li>• Dr. Kuljeet Singh Grewal, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada</li> <li>• Dr. Jaswinder Singh, McGill University, Canada</li> </ul>
3:15pm	Break
3:30pm	<p><b>Canadian Political Landscape (Democracy, Polarization, Global/National/Local)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Baljit Singh, VP Research, University of Saskatchewan, Canada</li> <li>• Charlie Smith, Editor Vancouver Media, B.C, Canada</li> <li>• The Hon. Wally Oppal K.C., former Justice of BC's Court of Appeal, Attorney General &amp; Minister of Multiculturalism of BC, Canada</li> <li>• Rumneek Kaur Johal, Associate Editor, Press Progress, Canada</li> <li>• Anupreet Sandhu Bhamra, UBC Faculty, Canada</li> </ul>
4:45pm	Day 1 Summary
6:30pm	<p><b>DINNER - Fireside Chat Guest: The Honourable Harjit Singh Sajjan,</b>  <i>President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness of Canada, Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada</i>  <i>Moderated by Neesha Kaur Hothi, GNI Advisor, Marketing &amp; Communications</i></p>

**DAY 2 AGENDA**

**Sunday, September 29, 2024**  
**www.gurunanakinstitute.ca**

7:30am*	Registration & Continental Breakfast
8:30am	<b>Opening Remarks</b> <i>Summit Co-Chair: Dr. Satpal Singh, Professor Emeritus, State University of New York, Buffalo, USA</i>
8:45am	<b>Greetings</b> <i>BC Conservative Party Leader, Mayor of Langley</i>
9:30am	<b>Keynote: Decolonizing Education - Spaces of Inclusion, Innovation and Creative Thinking</b> <i>Dr. Manjeet Kaur Ramgotra, Faculty Member, University of London, UK</i>
10:00am	Break
10:15am	Virtual Convocation
10:45am	<b>Overcoming Barriers: Struggles and Solutions for Bagri Sikhs in Pakistan</b> <i>Dr. Sagarjeet Singh, Practicing Physician &amp; Research Scholar, Pakistan</i>
11:15am	<b>Silent Struggles: Addressing the Rise of Mental Health Issues in the UK's Sikh Community</b> <i>Nimrita Kaur Bahia, Psychologist &amp; Faculty Member, Coventry University, UK</i>
11:45pm	Lunch & Group Picture
12:45pm	<b>Panel: Family Mental Health: Everyone Matters</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Prabhleen Kaur Sandhu, D. Clin. Psy (UK) &amp; Supervised Psychology Practitioner, Canada</li> <li>• Dr. Gurvinder Singh Warrya, UBC Department of Psychiatry, Clinical Faculty, VCHA, Canada</li> <li>• Lavleen Kaur Walia, UBC Student &amp; Founder, Project Mind Foundation, Canada</li> <li>• Tejinder Singh Gill, Youth Worker, Options Community Services, Canada</li> <li>• Nimrita Kaur Bahia, Psychologist &amp; Faculty Member, Coventry University, UK</li> </ul>
2:15pm	<b>Youth Voices (TED Talk format)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jasmine Kaur Sidhu, Student, University of British Columbia</li> <li>• Harman Singh, Student, Kwantlen Polytechnic University</li> <li>• Simar Kaur Shoker, Student, Simon Fraser University</li> </ul>
2:40pm	Break
3:00pm	<b>Panel: Imagining Guru Nanak University in Canada</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Satvir Singh, Associate Professor, Angelo State University, Texas, USA</li> <li>• Dr. Zora Singh, Chancellor, Desh Bhagat University, India</li> <li>• Dr. Baljit Singh, VP Research, University of Saskatchewan, Canada</li> <li>• Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains, Director SASI &amp; Senior Faculty Associate, University of Fraser Valley, Canada</li> <li>• Gian Singh Sandhu, President &amp; CEO, Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies, Canada</li> </ul>
4:30pm	Summit Closing Summary
4:45pm	End of Summit

# GREETINGS

September 28 & 29, 2024  
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**The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau**  
Prime Minister of Canada



**The Hon. David Eby**  
Premier of British Columbia



**John Rustad**  
Conservative Party Leader, B.C.



**Mayor Brenda Locke**  
City of Surrey, B.C.



**Mayor Nathan Pachal**  
Mayor of Langley, B.C.

# DAY 1 WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

September 28, 2024  
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## Tanti Saaj - Bhupinder Singh



Bhupinder Singh, along with his students Ravjot Kaur, Gurleen Kaur, Manmohan Singh, and Divroop Kaur, will perform the Tanti Saaj before the program begins.

## Indigenous Welcome - Kevin Kelly

Kwantlen First Nation.



A Business Management student at Simon Fraser University, Gurmat Singh is committed to blending his academic knowledge with hands-on experience in financial literacy for families, while exploring the broader implications of economic stability at both micro and macro levels. As a non-partisan staff member at the House of Commons he received a unique opportunity to observe Canadian democracy in action and gain firsthand insight into the complexities of the legislative process. Gurmat Singh continues to pursue his interests in financial management, government relations, and Sikh history.

## Opening Remarks by Our Summit Co-Chair - Dr. Baljit Singh



Dr. Baljit Singh, Vice President of Research at the University of Saskatoon, is a highly accomplished veterinary researcher and sought-after speaker. He has received prestigious accolades such as the Outstanding Veterinary Anatomist Award and the Pfizer Award for Research Excellence. Dr. Singh is a fellow of the American Association of Anatomists and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. His expertise lies in the cell and molecular biology of lung inflammation. With extensive national and international experience, Dr. Singh has made significant contributions to the field.

## Opening Remarks by GNI President - Gian Singh Sandhu

Gian Singh Sandhu is an author, academic, and enterprise strategist with a notable business and community service career. As the former President and CEO of a group of forest companies in British Columbia, his leadership has dramatically impacted various social, cultural, and professional organizations. He has also served on regional, provincial, and national advisory boards. In recognition of his contributions, he was awarded the Order of British Columbia.



## Saturday EMCEE - Gurjit Kaur



Gurjit Kaur is an educator and lawyer from Brampton, Ontario, who obtained her law degree from City University, London and her Master's in law from Osgoode Hall Law School, Toronto. With a deep commitment to community service and youth development, she's been a youth champion from her teens, leading diverse initiatives for their growth. In her teaching profession, Gurjit Kaur specializes in social justice and equity studies, specifically the Canadian legal system and public healthcare. An avid runner, Gurjit Kaur personifies endurance and determination, traits she seeks to nurture in her students. Her aim extends beyond education, striving to foster the potential for societal change within her students.

## DAY 2 WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

September 29, 2024  
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### Opening Remarks by Our Summit Co-Chair - Dr. Satpal Singh



Dr. Satpal Singh is Professor Emeritus of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the State University of New York at Buffalo. His research focused on understanding and combating neurodegenerative diseases, and he used to run an annual summer-long research program at Cambridge University, UK. Dr. Singh is a 1984 Sikh genocide survivor. He is a founding trustee of the Sikh Council for Interfaith Relations, is a key promoter of interfaith harmony, and has represented Sikhi in many forums including delivering a prayer on peace and harmony along with Pope Francis. He is a regular Op-Ed writer for the Washington Post and the Huffington Post.

### Sunday, September 29, 2024 EMCEE - Dr. Kamaljit Kaur Sidhu

Dr. Kamaljit Kaur Sidhu has over 30 years' experience as an educator and registered psychologist in British Columbia. She has worked with individuals across the lifespan, including elementary, high school and university level students. Dr. Sidhu completed her Ph.D. in Counselling Psychology from the University of British Columbia (2000). Her research interests have been in self and identity construction of Sikh adolescents and migrant populations. She has served on appointed and elected boards including board member for the British Columbia School Counsellors' Association and board member and President for the British Columbia Psychological Association. In addition to her private practice in psychology, Dr. Sidhu continues to volunteer to promote community education about mental health through media interviews, workshops and presentations to professionals and the public.



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# SUMMIT DINNER & DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

September 28, 2024  
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## Dinner Keynote - The Hon. Harjit Singh Sajjan



The Honourable Harjit Singh Sajjan is a trailblazer in Canadian politics and a role model for youth. From his early life in South Vancouver to becoming Canada's first Sikh Minister of National Defence, Sajjan's journey exemplifies resilience, leadership, and dedication. A decorated soldier, Sajjan served as a lieutenant-colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces, earning the Meritorious Service Medal and the Order of Military Merit, and became the first Sikh to command a Canadian Army regiment. A former Vancouver Police detective specializing in gang crime, he was elected as MP for Vancouver South in 2015. He has served as Minister of National Defence, Minister of International Development, and is currently the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness of Canada, Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada. His unwavering commitment to Canada and dedication to community service continue to inspire the next generation to pursue their dreams with determination and integrity.

## Fireside Chat Moderator - Neesha Kaur Hothi

Neesha is a passionate executive with 17 years of experience in events, marketing and communications and a resounding entrepreneurial spirit which has helped her successfully run her own agency for over a decade. She has worked across a variety of arts, culture, lifestyle and entertainment brands. Neesha's key career appointments include being the Event and Public Relations Manager for the Olympic Superstore for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, the Marketing and Communications Director for the 2018 and 2025 Vancouver JUNO Host Committee. On a personal level, she is a champion for ethnic voices, particularly South Asian voices, and consistently supports local not-for-profits in their work to preserve, elevate and highlight arts and culture. Neesha also acts as GNI's Advisor for Marketing & Communications.



## Dinner EMCEE- Sandip Kaur Sodhi



Sandip Kaur is an elementary school teacher with over 30 years of experience. She was an intermediate classroom teacher for many years and is currently the Teacher-Librarian at Sunnyside Elementary School where she teaches students from kindergarten to Grade 7. Sandip Kaur is passionate about teaching children social and emotional learning, unity and gratitude. She has created student involvement clubs at her school that focus on diversity, inclusivity, and kindness. She completed her B.A., B.Ed. and teacher-librarian qualification from the University of British Columbia, and her post baccalaureate diploma in technology from Simon Fraser University. Sandip has also authored three children's books and is currently working with SikhLens to release two more. Sandip's books are centred around themes of self-regulation, equality, and gratitude.

# SUMMIT KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

September 28 & 29, 2024

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## Saturday Opening Keynote - Dr. Alastair Summerlee



Dr. Summerlee is a passionate humanitarian, dedicated teacher, and internationally renowned researcher. He served as president and vice-chancellor of the University of Guelph from 2003 to 2014, interim president and vice-chancellor at Carleton University from 2017 to 2018, and was a professor of Biomedical Science from 1989 to 2017. He is currently an adjunct professor at the Sprott Business School at Carleton and an adjunct professor emeritus in biomedical science at the University of Guelph.

Dr. Summerlee served for six years on the board of the World University Service of Canada. During this time, he became involved in humanitarian efforts in the refugee camps in Kenya. His work focused on raising funds to support education for women and girls on campus, which attracted international investment from the governments of Canada and the UK, as well as from private individuals. Furthermore, Dr. Summerlee is part of the international movement known as the PUSH Initiative (President's United to Solve Hunger), which aims to unite universities worldwide in fighting hunger and poverty. In 2012, he was honoured as the International Quality of Life Laureate at the United Nations.

Dr. Summerlee has published numerous scientific articles about teaching and teaching practice, advocated in the media for better conditions in refugee camps and is regularly invited to speak on teaching, research, accountability, fund-raising and sustainable business. His current research focuses on iron deficiency and a simple innovation, known as the Lucky Iron Fish which can alleviate the condition for almost 2 billion people worldwide. He is also serving as a Special Advisor on Carleton University's capital campaign and the interim leader of Education City – an initiative to provide educational innovation in the Ottawa region.

## Sunday Opening Keynote - Dr. Manjeet Kaur Ramgatra

Manjeet Kaur Ramgatra is a Senior Lecturer in Political Theory at the Department of Politics and International Studies at SOAS University of London. She is the co-editor of a major new textbook called 'Rethinking Political Thinkers' published by Oxford University Press that reimagines the field of political theory. This textbook was inspired by her teaching that takes into account the colonial contexts in which much European political thinking was produced and brings to the fore marginalized thinkers who often challenged colonialist and patriarchal structures of power and thinking. Her research examines the history of republican ideas extending from classical European thought of Cicero, Machiavelli and Montesquieu to anticolonial political theory. Currently, she is working on a project on republicanism in the Indian anticolonial movement. She has published numerous articles on republicanism and on decolonising the curriculum, including a co-edited volume on Decolonising Curricula and Pedagogy in Higher Education (2020). She was a research fellow of the Independent Social Research Foundation in 2020-21. Since 2020, she has been a trustee of the Political Studies Association (PSA) Executive Committee for which she chairs the PSA EDI Working Group.



# DAY 1 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS

Saturday, September 28, 2024

[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)

## PANEL

### Internationalizing Higher Education: Challenges and Best Practices

#### Moderator - Dr. Victor V. Ramraj



Dr. Victor V. Ramraj is an accomplished law professor and CAPI (Centre for Asia Pacific Initiatives) Director at the University of Victoria. He previously spent 16 years at the National University of Singapore, where he twice served as the Faculty's Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs and twice seconded to the Center for Transnational Legal Studies in London. With five degrees from McGill Montreal, U of T Toronto and Queens University Belfast, his expertise includes Asian State company relations, comparative law, and transnational regulation. Dr Ramraj also served as a judicial law clerk at the Federal Court of Appeal in Ottawa, a litigation lawyer in Toronto, and leads the Advanced Scholars (QES-AS) funded research project, Regulating Globalization in South and Southeast Asia, with collaborations across multiple countries.

#### Panelist - Tricia Best

Tricia Best has an MA in Counselling Psychology from Simon Fraser University and is the Director, International Centre for Students at the University of Victoria (UVic). In this role she is responsible for strategic leadership and the oversight of services, programs and resources that support international students, provide international mobility and intercultural opportunities for domestic and international students, and advance the goals and objectives of UVic's Strategic Plans. Tricia has worked at UVic for 25 years including working as a counsellor, workshop facilitator and student leadership coordinator. Throughout her time at UVic, Tricia has supported and advocated for building a welcoming, diverse and globally-minded learning community at UVic. Her work and interests focus on student support and mobility, diversity and equity, social justice, international partner development, intercultural fluency and internationalization in higher education.



#### Panelist - Dr. Pooja Parmar



Dr. Parmar is an Associate Professor at the UVic Faculty of Law, specializing in legal pluralism, legal ethics, international human rights law, legal history, and law and colonialism. She holds a Ph.D. in Law from UBC and has previously taught at Carleton University, Osgoode Hall Law School, and UBC Faculty of Law. Since joining UVic in 2015, Dr. Parmar has focused her research on the legal profession, its history, and ethical lawyering. Her current projects include a SSHRC-funded study of Indigenous laws as sources of ethical legal practice in BC, and research on legal professionals in Canada, India, and Bhutan. Dr. Parmar's book, *Indigeneity and Legal Pluralism in India: Claims, Histories, Meanings*, explores Indigenous protests against a Coca-Cola facility. She teaches legal ethics and professionalism, property law, and international human rights law, and supervises graduate research on legal history, Indigenous rights, and social justice. She is a board member of the Canadian Association for Legal Ethics (CALE) and serves the editorial board of the Canadian Journal of Law & Society.

**DAY 1 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS****Saturday, September 28, 2024**[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)**PANEL****Internationalizing Higher Education: Challenges and Best Practices****Panelist - Dr. Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra**

Dr. Sharanjit Kaur is a respected historian, publisher, and dedicated educator, sharing her expertise teaching at UBC, UFV, and GNI. Dr. Sandhra has enriched the research field with significant scholarly contributions. She co-authored "Challenging Racist BC: 150 Years and Counting" and "A Social History of South Asians in British Columbia." These publications exemplify her commitment to tackling racism and exploring the rich history and experiences of South Asians in BC, reinforcing her stature as a prominent figure in her field.

**Panelist - Jaskaran Singh Benipal**

 Jaskaran came to Canada in 2016 as an international student at Langara College. Since 2022, he acts as the Executive Director at Experior Financial Group. He also co-founded "We Care Canada," the country's largest international non-profit student organization with over 20,000 members. Initially focused on providing settlement services for newcomers, including employment and accommodation support, the organization quickly expanded its mandate to address mental health issues, collaborating with the South Asian Mental Health Alliance (SAMHA), South Asian Health Institute (SAHI), and Fraser Health Authority. During COVID-19, Jaskaran led a team of 38 volunteers to deliver essential groceries to students in need. Team We Care Canada continues to support students through bi-weekly webinars and monthly social gatherings under the program "Baithak."

**PRESENTATION****Sikh Scientists' Contribution to Global Wheat Production****Dr. Kulvinder Singh Gill**

Dr. Gill earned his BSc in Agriculture (Hons) in 1981 and MSc in Plant Breeding in 1983 from Punjab Agricultural University before completing his PhD in Genetics at Kansas State University (KSU) in 1990. He remained at KSU as a postdoctoral researcher and Senior Scientist before joining the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, as a cytogeneticist and Assistant Professor. In 2002, he became the first Vogel Endowed Chair Professor at Washington State University. Dr. Gill has published over 200 scientific papers, holds an H-index of 59 and an i10-index of 145, developed four wheat varieties, and holds six patents. His research spans multiple countries, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Egypt, and he has founded six companies. Notable achievements include developing rapid breeding methods, cloning the Ph1 gene in wheat, creating 36 wheat germplasms with resistance genes, and demonstrating the utility of candidate gene approaches and advanced genetic tools, significantly advancing wheat genetics and breeding.



**DAY 1 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS****Saturday, September 28, 2024**[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)**PRESENTATION****Energy Sustainability in Built Environments: Path from Policies to Implementation****Dr. Kuljeet Singh Grewal**

Dr. Kuljeet S. Grewal is an Assistant Professor at the University of Prince Edward Island's Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering. He established the Future Urban Energy Lab for Sustainability (FUEL-S) in 2021, focusing on sustainable neighbourhoods, energy design, and net-zero approaches that integrate engineering, architecture, land use planning, and policymaking. Dr. Grewal earned his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Ropar in 2018 and has a B.Eng. in Mechanical Engineering and an M.Eng. in Thermal Engineering from Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology. He previously worked as a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Calgary from 2018 to 2021. He has co-led a subtask within Task 63: Solar Neighborhood Planning of the International Energy Agency (IEA) and served as a Guest Editor for two special issues in the Energies Journal. With 36 peer-reviewed journal articles, 4 IEA reports, and several conference proceedings and book chapters to his credit, Dr. Grewal leads numerous funded research projects through NSERC, provincial governments, NRC, MITACS, and industry partners, focusing on community-led transitions and innovative energy modelling techniques to promote long-term sustainability.

**PRESENTATION****Food and Nutritional Security: Contributions by Sikh Researchers****Dr. Jaswinder Singh**

Dr. Jaswinder Singh is an Associate Professor in the Department of Plant Science at McGill University and an Associate Member of the Bieler School of Environment. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Sydney and CSIRO, Canberra, followed by postdoctoral studies at the University of California, Berkeley. His research focuses on genomics, molecular breeding, and biotechnology, notably reversing epigenetic silencing and identifying novel barley genes related to Pre-Harvest Sprouting (PHS) and  $\beta$ -glucan activity. His team also explores cysteine-rich proteins, redox regulation, and transcription factors in plant phase transitions. Dr. Singh teaches "Plant Breeding" and "Biotechnology" and directs the multi-institutional NSERC-CREATE program on "Genome Editing for Food Security and Environmental Sustainability." He has published 65 research articles and delivered over 60 invited talks. Dr. Singh has trained more than 50 researchers and received numerous accolades, including the prestigious C. D. Nelson Award in 2018. In 2020, he was recognized as one of McGill's top 50 Professors for his visionary contributions.

**DAY 1 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS**

**Saturday, September 28, 2024**  
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**PANEL****Sikh Institutions' Contributions to Equitable Global Food Security****Moderator - Dr. Kulvinder Singh Gill**

Please see previously documented biography.

**Panelist - Dr. Kuljeet Singh Grewal**

Please see previously documented biography.

**Panelist - Dr. Jaswinder Singh**

Please see previously documented biography.

**Panelist - Maninder Singh Sandhu**

Maninder Singh Sandhu (Mani) is the Chief Operating Officer of Crown Nut Co., a prominent player in the almond and fruit growing industry across the United States, widely recognized as the "Almond King." The company boasts a diversified business portfolio spanning several states. Mani holds a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering from San Jose State University and a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. Before joining the family business, Mani gained valuable experience working with US Army Defense contractors and as a Mechanical Engineer for six years. In 2012, he transitioned to Sandhu Brothers Farms and Crown Nut Co., where he took on the role of COO. Under his leadership, the company has expanded its operations to over 65,000 acres of almond and various fruit cultivation, securing the top position in the industry. Mani's extensive experience and strategic vision have been instrumental in driving the company's success and solidifying its reputation as a leader in the agricultural sector.

**Panelist - Chanpreet Kaur Sandhu**

Ms. Sandhu is the Chief Executive Officer of Mangal Capital Inc., a family-owned holding company specializing in agriculture and real estate. Under her leadership, the company oversees the cultivation, packaging, and global distribution of cherries to over 20 countries, including major retailers across Canada. Chanpreet spearheaded the recent multi-million-dollar expansion of Sandhu Fruit Farm, launching a state-of-the-art cherry-packing facility. Chanpreet holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of British Columbia and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Human Resources from Okanagan College. In addition to her professional endeavours, she is an active volunteer at her local Gurdwara Sahib.

# DAY 1 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS

Saturday, September 28, 2024

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## PANEL

### Canadian Political Landscape (Democracy: Polarization, Global/National/Local)

#### Moderator - Rumneek Kaur Johal



Rumneek is an award-nominated journalist, host, and cultural commentator known for her incisive analysis and thought-provoking commentary. Currently serving as the Associate Editor at Press Progress, she focuses on uncovering systemic inequality, the rise of Canada's far-right, and the challenges immigrant and diaspora communities face. Her work is dedicated to starting essential conversations often neglected by mainstream media, and she isn't afraid to ask tough questions, challenging her communities and the status quo. Rumneek's background and identity deeply inform her approach to journalism, allowing her to shed light on underrepresented perspectives. She has become a prominent voice in Canadian media, committed to amplifying marginalized voices and fostering a more inclusive dialogue.

#### Panelist - Charlie Smith

Charlie Smith brings over three decades of experience in Vancouver's media landscape. He has worked with CBC Radio, CBC TV News, BCTV News (now Global News B.C.), and various private radio stations throughout his career. In addition to his roles in broadcast media, Charlie has edited a business magazine and contributed to numerous other publications. He spent 17 years as the editor of the Georgia Straight and taught journalism for seven years at Kwantlen University College (now Kwantlen Polytechnic University). Charlie's accomplishments include two Western Magazine Awards, a Community Builder Award from the Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society, an Anti-Racism Award from Spice Radio.



#### Panelist - The Honourable Wally Oppal, O.B.C., K.C.



Justice Oppal is a renowned Canadian lawyer, former Justice of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal of British Columbia, and a dedicated public servant. A law graduate from the University of British Columbia, he became a judge of the County Court of Vancouver in 1981 and was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1985. Oppal later served on the Court of Appeal until 2005, when he transitioned to politics as Attorney General of British Columbia and Minister for Multiculturalism. A strong advocate for justice reform, equality, and community safety, Oppal chaired the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry in 2010. He is a recipient of the Order of British Columbia. Oppal's expertise in dispute resolution is widely recognized. He serves as Senior Counsel, Arbitrator, and Mediator, specializing in this field. He is certified as an International Arbitrator by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, Houston, and as a Mediator by the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution, Pepperdine, California.

# DAY 1 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS

Saturday, September 28, 2024

[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)

## PANEL

### Canadian Political Landscape (Democracy: Polarization, Global/National/Local)

#### Panelist - Anupreet Sandhu Bhamra

Anupreet Sandhu Bhamra is a lecturer at the University of British Columbia (UBC). With over two decades of experience as a transnational journalist in Canada and India, she has reported on diverse issues across various media platforms. Anu holds a Master's degree in English and a Master's degree in Journalism from UBC, where she received the Broadcaster of the Future Award from Global TV. Currently, she is a Ph.D. candidate in Journalism and Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice Institute at UBC. Her research explores the impact of digital media on gender, race, and cultural identity and how it contributes to nation building. Anu teaches courses on feminist postcolonial critique and new media, and her work on South Asian-Canadian media has been published in book chapters. She is currently teaching Business Communications at the UBC Sauder School of Business. She is an advocate for gender equality and the immigrant experience and sits on UBC's Anti- Racism & Indigenous Initiatives Committee.



#### Panelist - Dr. Baljit Singh

Please see previously documented biography.



## PRESENTATION

### Reconstructing the Zafarnama with Contemporaneous Manuscript Evidence

#### Dr. Harpreet Singh



Dr. Singh is a scholar of South Asian traditions and languages at Harvard University. His research focuses on forming religious identities in premodern South Asia and the nationalization of religious communities in the modern era. He engages with a wide array of sources, including Persian, Sanskrit, Classical Punjabi, Braj Bhasha, Awadhi, and Urdu. Dr. Singh co-founded the Sikh Coalition, the most prominent Sikh civil rights organization in North America, in response to hate crimes against Sikh Americans after the September 11 attacks. He earned his PhD in South Asian Religions from Harvard's Study of Religion Committee and an MTS from Harvard Divinity School. Dr. Singh sits on various advisory boards and is actively involved with the Harvard Chaplains, serving the Sikh community through the Harvard Sikh Center.

## DAY 2 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS

**Sunday, September 29, 2024**  
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### PRESENTATION

#### **Overcoming Barriers: Struggles and Solutions for Bagri Sikhs in Pakistan** **Dr. Sagarjeet Singh**

Dr. Singh is a pioneering medical professional and researcher, recognized as the only Sikh MBBS doctor in Sindh, Pakistan. Specializing in nephrology and kidney transplantation at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT), his medical practice is complemented by his research on the health and social challenges faced by the Bagri Sikh community, a marginalized group in Sindh. His work emphasizes integrating traditional health practices with modern medicine to address healthcare disparities and promote educational opportunities within this community. Dr. Singh is dedicated to enhancing healthcare accessibility and socio-economic development for underrepresented groups, advocating for representation in professional fields through his clinical and academic contributions. He is also a GNI alumni.



### PRESENTATION

#### **Silent Struggles: Addressing the Rise of Mental Health Issues in the UK's Sikh Community**

**Nimrita Kaur Bahia**



Ms. Bahia is a dedicated academic and practitioner with extensive experience in youth mental health and safeguarding. Currently, she serves as the Course Director and Lecturer of Childhood, Youth, & Education Studies at Coventry University, U.K., where she also holds the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) role. Nimrita's academic background includes an MSc in Health Psychology, a Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education, and specialized training in hypnotherapy, psychotherapy, and mental health. Her research interests focus on the wellbeing of children and young people, particularly from BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee) groups, and safeguarding within educational settings. With a robust career in higher education management, Nimrita has contributed significantly to curriculum development, safeguarding initiatives, and academic support for students. Her commitment to promoting mental health awareness and equity in education is reflected in her leadership roles and active participation in various academic and community-based projects.

### PANEL

#### **Family Mental Health: Everyone Matters**

**Moderator - Nimrita Kaur Bahia**



Please see previously documented biography.

# DAY 2 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS

Sunday, September 29, 2024

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## PANEL Family Mental Health: Everyone Matters

### Panelist - Dr. Gurvinder Singh Warrya



Dr. Warrya is currently a Psychiatrist (specialist in General Adult Mental Health) with Vancouver Coastal Health with consulting privileges at Lions Gate Hospital in Vancouver and will be starting practice with Fraser Health in October. Dr. Warrya has extensive global training and experience in patient care. He completed his medical degree (MD medicine) from Odessa National Medical University in Ukraine, and worked as a junior doctor in India, prior to moving to the UK where he practiced as a doctor and acquired further specialized training in psychiatry from University College London (UCL). He was the consultant psychiatrist at West Middlesex Hospital in England in an acute psychiatric ward, and practiced in adult psychiatry for 12 years prior to moving to Canada. He worked in forensic psychiatry. He acquired Fellowship of Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (FRCP) and has been working in Richmond, BC for the past 6 years in various community based mental health services. Additionally, he has been serving as clinical lead for ACTT Richmond (Assertive Community Treatment Team) for 6 years.

### Panelist - Lavleen Kaur Walia



Lavleen Kaur Walia is a fourth-year Biology student at the University of British Columbia and the founder of Project Mind Foundation, an initiative dedicated to bridging the gap between mental health and medicine. Lavleen is deeply committed to mental health advocacy, particularly for marginalized communities, and has been actively involved in creating supportive spaces for students at UBC.

Her work includes the development of a blog platform to highlight stories of individuals whose lives have been touched by mental health struggles in any capacity, along with the development of a Sensory Room and Mental Health Hub, designed to provide accessible mental health resources and foster a sense of community on campus. Lavleen's passion for mental health is informed by her personal experiences, driving her to create change and support others facing similar challenges.

### Panelist - Dr. Prabhleen Kaur Sandhu



Dr. Prabhleen Kaur Sandhu is a UK-trained Clinical Psychologist, she has extensive experience providing psychological services to individuals across the lifespan, with a focus on support for children, teens, and their families. She is skilled in various therapeutic modalities and specializes in treating a wide range of difficulties.

Dr. Sandhu has held positions in the National Health Service (NHS England) and BC Children's and Women's Hospital (Neonatal Intensive Care Service). She is also working with the Ministry of Family and Child Development (MCFD) supporting children and families from Indigenous backgrounds. Dr. Sandhu is known for her compassionate approach and believes that personalized care is essential for fostering growth and well-being.

**DAY 2 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS**

**Sunday, September 29, 2024**  
[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)

**PANEL**  
**Family Mental Health: Everyone Matters**

**Panelist - Tejinder Singh Gill**

With over 26 years in British Columbia's social services sector, Mr. Gill has developed a distinguished career in addiction therapy and youth support. Currently a youth worker at Options Community Resources Society, he has also amassed over 16 years of experience in addiction therapy, including a key role as a Substance Abuse Counsellor at the Langley Youth Resource Centre, the first province-wide treatment center for high-risk youth in B.C. Mr. Gill's experience includes working with street youth in Vancouver group homes, serving as a Youth Counsellor with the Boys & Girls Club of Delta/Richmond, and involvement in gang prevention programs. A member of the Canadian Addictions Counsellors Certification Federation (CACCF) since 2013, Mr. Gill earned the International Certified Alcohol & Drug Counsellor (I.C.A.D.C.) and Canadian Certified Addictions Counsellor (C.C.A.C.) designations, and contributed as a Subject Matter Expert in developing CACCF's first Addictions exam.



**YOUTH VOICES**  
**TED Talks Format**



**Jasmine Kaur Sidhu**  
 Student  
 University of British Columbia



**Harman Singh**  
 Student  
 Kwantlen Polytechnic University



**Simar Kaur Shoker**  
 Student  
 Simon Fraser University

**PANEL**  
**Imagining Guru Nanak University in Canada**

**Moderator - Dr. Satvir Singh**

Dr. Satvir Singh is a distinguished educator and researcher specializing in international business, organizational behaviour and law. Holding a Ph.D. from the University of Texas El Paso, an MBA from Willamette University and a law degree from Punjabi University, his profound understanding of global complexities is multi-dimensional. Noteworthy for his instruction and mentorship, Dr. Singh significantly influences academia through his numerous publications and presentations. His latest research on the role of Granthis in Gurduaras (Sikh places of assembly and worship) demonstrates his ongoing contributions to pertinent scholarly discourse.



## DAY 2 PRESENTERS & PANELISTS

Sunday, September 29, 2024

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### PANEL

#### Imagining Guru Nanak University in Canada

##### Panelist - Dr. Baljit Singh

Please see previously documented biography.



##### Panelist - Gian Singh Sandhu



Please see previously documented biography.

##### Panelist - Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains

Dr. Bains is the Director of the South Asian Studies Institute and an Associate Professor in Social, Cultural, and Media Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley. Her research focuses on the migration, settlement, and integration of South Asian Canadians, with a particular emphasis on language, culture, and identity. She has explored issues such as race, racism, ethnicity, and Sikh feminist ideologies and Punjabi cultural historiographies. Dr. Bains has published extensively on cross-cultural education, anti-racist curriculum implementation, and community development. She is also known for advocating for social justice and women's rights and preserving South Asian Canadian histories.



##### Panelist - Dr. Zora Singh



Dr. Singh is a medical practitioner and the Chancellor of Desh Bhagat University in Punjab, a visionary leader and renowned educationist with over four decades of experience in education. He founded Desh Bhagat University with the mission of providing accessible, quality education and fostering innovation and social responsibility among students. Under his leadership, the university has become a prominent institution offering diverse programs across various disciplines. Dr. Singh is committed to community service and has been instrumental in numerous social initiatives for rural development and women empowerment. He holds several honorary degrees and accolades for his contributions to education and society. Dr. Singh's dedication to academic excellence and social welfare continues to inspire students and educators alike.



# GURU NANAK INSTITUTE OF GLOBAL STUDIES

The Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies (GNI) is a non-profit teaching and research institute established in Canada. With an advisory team of over 200 international academics and professionals, GNI aims to research and expand the understanding of the Sikh ethos from an academic perspective, striving for the co-existence of Sikhi and cultural diversity through research, education and service.

The GNI vision is to create a university comparable to the world's leading educational institutions. GNI is committed to the values of humanity, equality, equity, justice, compassion, open dialogue, spiritual revolution, life-long learning, and emancipatory teaching that are synonymous with the name Guru Nanak (the revealer of Sikhi).

## Guru Nanak Institute

*Celebrating cultural diversity & a spirit of co-existence through research, education, & service.*



## ABOUT GNI

Learn more about the Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies.  
[www.gurunanakinstitute.ca](http://www.gurunanakinstitute.ca)

The name of Guru Nanak (the revealer of Sikhi) is synonymous with equality, equity, justice, compassion, open dialogue, spiritual revolution, life-long learning, and emancipatory teaching. The Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies (GNI) is a non-profit foundation. GNI was founded in 2021 by prominent leaders from the Canadian Sikh community, the largest outside of India, to commemorate Guru Nanak's 550th anniversary. Today, the global Sikh population exceeds 28 million (the fifth largest religious faith), of which over 750,000 call Canada home.

GNI's founders currently form the institution's Board of Directors and are supported by an Advisory Board, made up of academics and professionals, as well as an Academic Board composed of educators and researchers from countries around the world, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and India.

GNI is proud to host:

- A faculty comprised of globally based university professors from a variety of fields and disciplines, with strong representation from British Columbia's post-secondary institutions.
- A staff that reflects the composition of the community it serves and that of our student body.
- A diverse and inclusive student body comprised of domestic learners from British Columbia and Canada as well as international learners from the global community.
- Research scholars from around the world.

## OUR GOALS

- Provide a world-class infrastructure and academic environment for research and teaching on Sikh philosophy, history, literature, culture, and devotional music in an interdisciplinary manner.
- Establish partnerships with accredited, public secondary and post-secondary institutions to offer for-credit courses, evolving into micro-credential programs and then to diplomas and certificates, ultimately becoming a degree-granting institution accredited by the Province of British Columbia.
- Support independent applied research on topics relating to Sikhs, Sikhi, and other related fields, where researchers are provided with an environment of complete academic freedom, unconstrained by GNI or outside influences.
- Enable educational research that is focused on curriculum development and assessment, the evaluation and implementation of tools for teaching and learning, as well as educational technologies and methodologies.
- Ensure equal and open access to all prospective students by alleviating funding and other financial barriers.
- Support ground-breaking research projects and student scholarships.



## OUR PROGRAMS

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GNI courses are approved by the Private Training Institutions Branch (PTIB) of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training, British Columbia.

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*Students become acquainted with Sikh religious, moral, and social values.*

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