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## International Sikh Research Summit 2024 Summary Report

September 30, 2024

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Jis kaa kaaraj tin hee keeaa maanas kiaa vechaaraa raam  
(Every action and effort in life is ultimately shaped by the Divine will)  
(Guru Arjan Sahib SGGS 783)

Dear Participants,

Before I provide you with a summary of events at the summit, let's reflect on the above verse by Guru Arjan Sahib, the fifth guru of Sikhs. Guru illuminates a profound truth: that every action and effort in life is ultimately shaped by the Divine will. It reminds us of the limitations of our human capacity, gently challenging the illusion of control or ownership over our achievements. In this realization, there is a call for deep surrender and humility—acknowledging that while we may play our part as instruments of action, the true force behind all outcomes is the Creator. This perspective invites us to transcend ego and embrace the sacred flow of life, where the Divine is both the source and sustainer of all that unfolds.

What lies within our control is the power to commit, dedicate ourselves, and work diligently toward our vision. While the outcomes rest in the hands of the Divine, it is through sincere effort, perseverance, and focus that we align with the path to fulfillment. Our responsibility is to take action with faith and integrity, trusting the rest to a higher will.

Congratulations on a successful summit!

I want to take this moment to sincerely commend each one of you who participated (in-person or virtually) in these two intensive days of exploration, discussion, and intellectual rigour. Your dedication to this summit reflects a profound commitment to advancing knowledge and understanding—pillars that have always been at the heart of any great academic pursuit. Like the foundation of any lasting institution, research is the cornerstone upon which innovation is built. Throughout this summit, we have witnessed the steps toward shaping a future rich with new insights, discoveries, and solutions to our global challenges.

The dialogue and presentations over these two days have served as a powerful reminder that research is not merely an academic exercise but the driving force behind real-world progress. From exploring new ways to tackle food production and insecurity to internationalizing advanced education and advancing the frontiers of mental health awareness, energy sustainability, and political engagement, the discussions here have laid the groundwork for the impactful and transformative research that will shape the future.

As we look toward the future of GNI, the dedication shown here is a testament to what this institution aspires to be—an academic powerhouse that fosters research-driven innovation. Your contributions will be instrumental in building GNI as a distinctive university that excels in teaching and learning and serves as a beacon of cutting-edge research. This research will drive new inventions, policies, and solutions that have a meaningful impact on the world stage.

Your efforts here are just the beginning. The knowledge shared and connections forged during this summit will undoubtedly strengthen GNI's mission to become a university known for its academic distinction, where research is encouraged and celebrated as the foundation of future progress and global impact. Thank you for your commitment, insight, and dedication to this shared vision.

While a comprehensive publication of the summit proceedings will be released in the near future, I would like to take this opportunity to share some of the key highlights and a summarized overview of the remarkable discussions and presentations that unfolded over the past two days. These sessions brought together a diverse group of experts, scholars, and practitioners who engaged in profound, meaningful dialogue on a wide range of topics critical to global challenges and the Sikh community's contributions.

## **Day 1 - September 28, 2024**

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### **Registration & Continental Breakfast**

At 7:00 am sharp, GNI staff and volunteers were on-site, eagerly preparing to welcome the enthusiastic participants. As attendees arrived, they gathered for registration and enjoyed a continental breakfast, providing a relaxed atmosphere to network and introduce themselves before the formal sessions commenced.

### **Opening**

Bhupinder Singh and his team of passionate young Gurmat Sangeet students (Ravjot Kaur, Gurleen Kaur, Divroop Kaur, and Manmohan Singh) set the tone for the summit with a serene and melodic performance on tanti saaj (traditional string instruments). Their music established an atmosphere of calm and reflection, creating the perfect setting for the proceedings that followed.

The Master of Ceremonies, Gurjit Kaur, then introduced Gurmat Singh, who led the Sikh *Ardas* (prayer) in three languages—Punjabi, English, and French—underscoring the event’s inclusive and multicultural ethos. This invocation was followed by a blessing from Indigenous elder Kevin Kelly of the Kwantlen First Nation, adding a profound layer of cultural exchange and acknowledgment of the land on which the event was held.

A brief introduction outlined the purpose of the summit, emphasizing the significance of bringing together scholars, practitioners, and community members to engage in meaningful discussions about the global contributions of Sikhs across various fields. The introduction highlighted the event’s central aim of fostering dialogue on the worldwide impact of Sikh communities and their valuable contributions to education, innovation, and social justice.

The summit transitioned into its opening remarks, delivered by Dr. Baljit Singh, co-chair. In his enthusiastic address, Dr. Singh acknowledged the collaborative efforts of the organizing team, particularly his co-chair, Dr. Satpal Singh, in bringing the event to fruition. He emphasized the critical role of research and innovation in addressing global challenges while also spotlighting the unique contributions of Sikh scholars and professionals in shaping international dialogues on issues ranging from education to food security.

### **Greetings**

Sukh Dhaliwal, Liberal MP, welcomed delegates and read the message from the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Canada. The Hon. Rachna Singh, BC’s Minister of Education, represented the Honourable Premier of British Columbia David Eby. In addition to extending her personal message of the significance of education and research, she read the Premier’s greeting. Each leader acknowledged the critical contributions made by the Sikh community to Canadian society and applauded the focus on research, education, and global engagement during the summit.

### **Keynote: Building an Excellent University from Scratch**

Dr. Alastair Summerlee, former President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guelph and Carleton University in Canada, delivered a thought-provoking keynote address that provided deep insights into the complexities and rewards of establishing a high-quality university from the ground up. Drawing from his experience leading two institutions, Dr. Summerlee expressed concerns about modern universities failing to meet the evolving needs of students. He emphasized a growing disconnect between universities and the rapidly changing demands, particularly in access to information. Before delving deeper into his presentation, he acknowledged the shared suffering of Indigenous and Sikh communities. Dr. Summerlee also questioned the motivations behind building new universities, stressing the high costs and the need for strategic planning, while recognizing the importance of distinguished scholars in shaping the future of education.

Dr. Summerlee drew on his extensive experience in academic leadership to discuss the fundamental strategies necessary for building a successful university. He addressed key elements

such as governance structures, the importance of securing sustainable financial resources and cultivating a strong academic culture. His comparative analysis of for-profit and non-profit (charitable) university models was particularly illuminating, highlighting each approach's distinct advantages and challenges.

Furthermore, Dr. Summerlee emphasized the critical role of research excellence, student engagement, and fostering an environment of innovation and inclusivity. His critique of the current state of many private universities, which he argued have increasingly become profit-driven enterprises serving their boards rather than fulfilling the true mission of education, provided a sobering reflection on the direction of higher education.

In addressing the process of setting up a university, Dr. Summerlee explored a range of crucial considerations, including the fundamental question of why a new university should be established. He detailed the financial, administrative, and accreditation challenges that must be navigated and underscored the importance of making informed decisions about whether the institution should be private or public. He also noted how universities have evolved over the decades in response to shifting social imperatives, changing student demographics, the transformation of information, and the evolving teaching and learning methods.

A significant aspect of his address was the importance of decision-making in unforeseen and challenging circumstances. He illustrated this point by recounting a real-time experience involving a Palestinian group that visited to discuss their plight. This encounter demonstrated the need for adaptability and composure in navigating difficult situations, a skill essential for the leadership of any meaningful institution.

## **Break**

Participants took a brief break to network and reflect on the keynote, using the time to recharge and engage in discussions on the transformative role of higher education in societal development. The informal exchanges over refreshments highlighted how universities drive innovation, leadership, and progress, fostering both personal and collective growth.

## **Panel 1: Internationalizing Higher Education: Challenges and Best Practices**

Dr. Victor Ramraj (University of Victoria) expertly moderated the session, steering a competent panel that included Dr. Pooja Parmar (University of Victoria), Dr. Sandhra (Guru Nanak Institute), Trica Best (University of Victoria), and Jaskaran Singh (We Care Canada). Their collective insights made the session both intellectually engaging and memorable, with attendees actively participating through thought-provoking discussions and a steady flow of questions.

The panel focused on the internationalization of higher education, exploring critical strategies for attracting students and adapting university programs to address global challenges. Each panellist contributed valuable perspectives on best practices for student engagement, fostering inclusivity, and designing curricula that resonate in an increasingly interconnected world. They

also stressed the importance of establishing strategic partnerships with international institutions to enhance academic collaboration and knowledge exchange.

A key part of the discussion was the significant challenges international students face, including cultural adaptation, academic integration, financial constraints, and mounting pressures on mental health. The panellists provided actionable recommendations to improve institutional support and enhance international students' overall educational experience and well-being. They also delved into the challenges universities face, such as navigating evolving provincial and federal regulations, addressing immigration policies, and combatting the exploitation of international students by universities, employers, and the community at large.

Further, the panel critiqued current university policies, particularly those requiring international students to repeatedly demonstrate proficiency in English during their studies and careers. They highlighted the lack of comprehensive guidance for international students regarding career development, immigration regulations, and academic coursework, even during orientation programs. Issues of racial discrimination and abuse were also addressed, with the panel noting how media sometimes inadvertently exacerbates these challenges.

Another focal point was significant mental health concerns, often inadequately addressed by institutions. The panellists emphasized the urgent need for universities to expand mental health resources to better support international students, particularly in light of their unique pressures.

## **Presentations**

### **1. Sikh Scientists' Contribution to Global Wheat Production**

Dr. Kulvinder Singh Gill, a distinguished researcher from Washington State University, delivered a comprehensive and academically rigorous presentation on the pivotal contributions of Sikh scientists to global wheat production. Drawing on his extensive research in agricultural sciences, Dr. Gill explored cutting-edge advancements in crop genetics and farming techniques, addressing some of the most pressing challenges in global food security.

Central to Dr. Gill's presentation was the focus on how innovations in crop science have significantly enhanced wheat yields, particularly in regions facing climate-related stressors such as heat and drought. He detailed the development of wheat varieties that have been genetically optimized to thrive in diverse climates, emphasizing the importance of understanding how different crops respond to varying environmental conditions. For instance, he pointed out that wheat, traditionally grown in temperate climates, is increasingly vulnerable to rising global temperatures, which threaten both grain quality and yield. By contrast, crops such as rice and corn, which flourish in warmer, more humid environments, are influenced differently by climate change. Advances in biotechnology, Dr. Gill explained, have led to the creation of heat-resistant and drought-tolerant wheat varieties, which are critical for ensuring productivity in the face of shifting weather patterns.

A key aspect of Dr. Gill's research focuses on moving innovations from the laboratory to the field, where they can have a tangible impact on food production. He highlighted the stark gap between potential and actual crop yields, noting that currently, we harvest only a tiny fraction of what is possible—often as little as 17-18% of the maximum potential yield. This, he argued, presents a significant opportunity to increase global food availability without requiring additional resources or inputs. Dr. Gill also discussed the use of beneficial genes from wild species that naturally survive in stressful environmental conditions, further demonstrating how these genetic resources can be harnessed to improve crop resilience and yield.

In addition to addressing the technical aspects of crop science, Dr. Gill also tackled misconceptions surrounding the nutritional value of wheat and other grains. Specifically, he debunked popular myths about gluten-free diets, explaining that gluten is a natural protein found in wheat and related grains, essential for many individuals' nutritional needs. While he acknowledged that those with celiac disease or gluten intolerance must avoid gluten, he clarified that gluten is a beneficial protein that supports overall health for the general population.

Dr. Gill's presentation underscored the broader contributions of Sikh scientists to the fields of agriculture and global food security. Their research not only enhances crop production but also strengthens the resilience of global food systems, ensuring that they are better equipped to meet the nutritional needs of a growing population amid environmental challenges. By bridging the gap between research and field application, Dr. Gill and his colleagues are driving solutions that address current and future food sustainability issues.

## **2. Energy Sustainability in Built Environments: Path from Policies to Implementation**

Dr. Kuljeet Singh Grewal, an emerging and gifted researcher at the University of Prince Edward Island, delivered an in-depth presentation on the challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainable energy policies within urban development. His research focuses on bridging the gap between government sustainability initiatives and practical applications within built environments, aiming to improve energy efficiency and reduce the environmental footprint of urban infrastructure.

One of the key points Dr. Grewal addressed is the pressing need for urban planners and architects to prioritize energy-efficient designs in buildings and facilities. He noted that many existing structures needed to be constructed with energy efficiency in mind, which presents a significant challenge in meeting contemporary sustainability standards. To mitigate this, Dr. Grewal emphasized the importance of designing buildings that meet and exceed current sustainable energy requirements. He particularly highlighted the potential of south-facing buildings, which are better positioned to harness solar energy. In regions where solar panels are used as a primary energy source, proper orientation can substantially increase energy generation, contributing to more efficient use of renewable energy resources.

Dr. Grewal also explored innovative approaches to storing solar energy, addressing one of solar power's critical limitations: its dependency on sunlight availability. He suggested that

advancements in battery storage technology could enable energy captured during peak sunlight hours to be stored for use when solar energy is unavailable. This would enhance the reliability of solar energy systems and promote energy independence by reducing reliance on centralized power grids.

In discussing the challenges of centralized energy generation, such as those posed by nuclear power plants, Dr. Grewal argued for a shift toward distributed energy generation. A decentralized approach, where energy is produced locally through smaller, renewable energy sources like solar panels or wind turbines, can offer greater resilience and reduce the risks associated with centralized energy systems. This model also aligns with sustainability goals by minimizing transmission losses and fostering greater energy autonomy for communities.

Dr. Grewal pointed out that the placement of windows and doors plays a critical role in building energy efficiency. Properly placed windows can maximize natural light, reducing the need for artificial lighting while also promoting natural ventilation, which decreases the reliance on air conditioning systems. This improves energy efficiency and enhances urban spaces' overall comfort and livability.

Dr. Grewal's presentation also underscored the broader challenges of translating sustainability policies into real-world applications. He provided examples of successful projects incorporating energy-efficient technologies and sustainable practices, demonstrating how policy-driven goals can be effectively implemented in urban development. These case studies serve as models for future urban planning initiatives, illustrating how thoughtful design and innovative technologies can create more sustainable, resilient cities.

Through his research, Dr. Grewal advocates for a holistic approach to sustainable energy that considers the technical aspects of energy generation and storage and urban development's practical and social implications. His work contributes to the growing body of knowledge aimed at creating energy-efficient cities that meet the environmental challenges of the 21st century.

### **3. Food and Nutritional Security: Contributions by Sikh Researchers**

Dr. Jaswinder Singh's presentation delved into the groundbreaking advancements in genetic technologies, specifically gene shifting, gene editing, and whole genome sequencing, and their critical role in improving food and nutritional security. He emphasized how these cutting-edge techniques are revolutionizing crop science by allowing researchers to precisely modify genetic material to enhance crop resilience, productivity, and nutritional content. By leveraging these technologies, scientists can develop more resistant crop varieties to environmental stressors such as extreme temperatures, drought, and pests while increasing yields to address food shortages in vulnerable regions.

Dr. Singh explained the practical implications of gene editing and whole genome sequencing in transforming the future of agriculture. He highlighted specific case studies where gene editing has been used to increase the micronutrient content of staple crops like rice and wheat, directly

contributing to the fight against malnutrition in regions where deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals are prevalent. This approach not only addresses immediate food shortages but also ensures that the nutritional quality of the food produced is improved, making a substantial impact on global public health.

In his presentation, Dr. Singh underscored the importance of applying these genetic innovations in real-world agricultural practices. He stressed that while the science behind gene editing and whole genome sequencing is advancing rapidly, translating these technologies into scalable solutions for farmers in developing countries is essential. Dr. Singh advocated for increased collaboration between researchers, governments, and international organizations to ensure these innovations are accessible to regions most affected by food insecurity. His presentation highlighted the potential of genetic technologies to increase food production and improve food's nutritional quality, offering a comprehensive solution to the global challenges of hunger and malnutrition.

#### **4. Sikh Institutions' Contribution (Almond King, Tracy, USA)**

Maninder Singh (Mani) Sandhu, representing Sandhu Bros Farms and Crown Nut Company from Tracy, California, delivered a captivating presentation at the research summit, highlighting his family's business's immense contributions to the agricultural and philanthropic sectors. As one of the largest privately owned agricultural enterprises in the United States, the company oversees over 65,000 acres of cultivable land dedicated to producing Almonds, Walnuts, Cherries and Pistachios. This impressive scale of operations has earned them the title of "The Almond King," reflecting their dominance in the almond production industry, not just in the U.S. but globally.

During his presentation, Sandhu elaborated on the sophisticated cultivation techniques and sustainable agricultural practices that allow their company to remain at the forefront of the industry. Their almond production is characterized by innovation and efficiency, contributing significantly to the global almond market and supporting the nutritional needs of millions. However, he emphasized that Sandhu Bros Farms and Crown Nut Company's success is not limited to agriculture alone. They have expanded their impact to other sectors, including urban development and philanthropic initiatives.

Sandhu underscored the company's \$8 billion development project, which is currently in progress. This project includes residential, commercial, and industrial buildout of a city. This ambitious project aims to integrate sustainable agriculture with urban planning, creating new infrastructure while promoting environmentally friendly practices. He explained how these projects are not merely about economic growth but are designed with a focus on community development, ensuring that the benefits of their work extend beyond their immediate business interests. A \$60M wastewater treatment plant has already been built, and the fire station, central park, and other amenities for the city, including an amphitheatre, pools, and community center, are underway.

In addition to their agricultural and development ventures, Maninder Singh Sandhu also discussed the company's extensive philanthropic efforts. Sandhu Bros Farms and Crown Nut Company have long been committed to giving back to the communities in which they operate, funding educational programs, healthcare initiatives, and infrastructure projects. Their philanthropic work is grounded in the Sikh principles of seva (selfless service) and community welfare, and their projects have had a tangible impact on improving the quality of life in both rural and urban areas.

Sandhu further emphasized the company's commitment to sustainable practices in agriculture, particularly in the face of challenges posed by climate change and water scarcity in California. The company is investing in water conservation technologies and energy-efficient systems to ensure the long-term viability of its farming operations. These efforts, Sandhu noted, are vital for both the company's future and the broader agricultural sector as it seeks to balance productivity with environmental stewardship. He highlighted the Almond Lifecycle and how, since 2010, they have reduced water consumption by 15% to grow almonds, and the target is to further reduce it by another 10% by the end of next year.

Sandhu's presentation highlighted the scale and success of Sandhu Bros Farms and Crown Nut Company and demonstrated their multi-dimensional approach to business. From being leaders in almond production to undertaking large-scale urban development and philanthropic projects, the company exemplifies how enterprises can drive economic growth while upholding sustainability, community development, and service values. Through their work, Sandhu Bros Farms contributes significantly to agriculture, urban development, and social progress, setting a powerful example of responsible corporate leadership.

## **5. Sikh Institutions' Contribution (Okanagan Cherry)**

Chanpreet Kaur Sandhu, President and CEO of Sandhu Fruit Farm in Okanagan, BC, presented her family company's pivotal role in Sikh Institutions' Contributions to Equitable Global Food Security. Established in 1986, Sandhu Fruit Farm has grown from its local roots to become an international supplier, now exporting cherries to over 20 countries worldwide. Her presentation emphasized the importance of ethical and sustainable business practices in the global agricultural industry, showcasing how Sikh values of community, equity, and responsibility are integral to their operations.

Sandhu highlighted the company's core business activities, which focus on the picking, cleaning, and packing of cherries. The farm's production capabilities are nothing short of impressive, with operations processing 6 tons of cherries per hour and projected to reach an astounding 5 million pounds in 2025. She also drew attention to their high-tech quality control systems, which assess the texture, colour, and overall quality of cherries within seconds, ensuring that only the finest produce is delivered to consumers around the globe. The company's commitment to sustainability and energy efficiency was central to her message.

Chanpreet also underscored the role of women in agriculture, particularly in traditionally male-dominated industries. She proudly emphasized how women, including herself, are stepping into leadership roles and reclaiming spaces that have long been underrepresented. Her journey, and that of Sandhu Fruit Farm, is an inspiring example of women's rightful place at the forefront of global business and food security.

In conclusion, her presentation demonstrated how Sandhu Fruit Farm is a successful business model of equitable and sustainable food production that upholds the Sikh ethos of service and responsibility. By providing high-quality produce to global markets while maintaining ethical business practices, Sandhu Fruit Farm exemplifies the vital contributions that Sikh-led enterprises are making toward achieving global food security and addressing the challenges of climate change.

### **Panel 2: Sikh Institutions' Contributions to Equitable Global Food Security**

Following their individual presentations, the panel opened the floor for an interactive Q&A session, with Dr. Kulvinder Singh Gill moderating the discussion. Dr. Gill expertly facilitated the session, skillfully addressing both technical and general questions from the participants. He ensured that each panellist—Dr. Jaswinder Singh, Dr. Kuljeet Singh Grewal, Maninder Singh Sandhu, and Chanpreet Kaur Sandhu—had the opportunity to delve deeper into key topics such as corporate responsibility, sustainable agriculture, and the significant role Sikh institutions play in promoting equitable global food security.

A particularly poignant moment came when Chanpreet Kaur captured the audience's hearts and received the loudest applause as she candidly shared her experiences as a young woman navigating leadership in a male-dominated industry. Her openness resonated with the audience, many of whom were inspired by her achievements and the scale of her company's success. The attendees were particularly awed by the size and influence of Crown Nut Company and its affiliated corporations, which span several states and play a significant role in the global almond industry.

Participants posed a wide array of questions, ranging from the technical aspects of gene editing and crop resilience to broader inquiries about how businesses like Sandhu Fruit Farm and Crown Nut Company strike a balance between profitability and social responsibility. The panel engaged in lively discussions on the challenges of scaling up sustainable farming practices to meet the demands of global food production while also addressing critical issues such as climate change and water scarcity.

A recurring theme throughout the Q&A session was how Sikh-led enterprises and academic researchers are contributing to philanthropic efforts and community development. Both Maninder Singh Sandhu and Chanpreet Kaur Sandhu expanded on their companies' philanthropic projects. Maninder highlighted Crown Nut Company's investments in community development across the U.S., focusing on initiatives that foster education, infrastructure, and economic growth. Chanpreet emphasized Sandhu Fruit Farm's contributions to rural

education and healthcare initiatives, reflecting the deep commitment of Sikh institutions to serve the communities in which they operate.

Meanwhile, Dr. Kuljeet Singh Grewal and Dr. Jaswinder Singh addressed questions related to their areas of expertise, discussing the impact of genetic research on improving crop yields and the challenges of implementing sustainable energy policies in agricultural development. Their insights highlighted the intersection of science, policy, and agriculture, providing a comprehensive view of how research and innovation are crucial to advancing food security on a global scale.

In conclusion, the panel shared a unified understanding that Sikh institutions and leaders, both in academia and business, are making significant contributions to equitable global food security. Through agricultural innovation, corporate responsibility, and community engagement, these leaders are not only ensuring food sustainability but also upholding values of equity, inclusivity, and service to humanity. The panel's diverse insights and collaborative spirit reinforced the importance of collective efforts in addressing the complex challenges of global food security in an evolving world.

The discussion ultimately underscored how agricultural advancements, corporate ethics, and institutional research are vital to global efforts to ensure everyone can access nutritious food.

### **Panel 3: Canadian Political Landscape (Democracy, Polarization, Global/National/Local)**

The panel, led by Rumneek Kaur Johal, explored the complexities of the Canadian political landscape with distinguished panellists, including Hon. Wally Oppal, Dr. Baljit Singh and Charlie Smith.

The discussion focused on themes such as democracy, political polarization, and the role of foreign government interventions in shaping Canada's national and local political climate. Key issues examined included:

- The growing polarization in Canadian politics, drawing parallels with the U.S. situation, where the two-party system is fragile and hate crimes, including those against Sikhs, are on the rise.
- The impact of social media in fueling divisions and the tension between free speech and accountability for harmful content.
- Immigration and economic uncertainty were identified as contributing factors to rising racism, with the media's role in monetizing divisive narratives also discussed.
- Institutions like universities were emphasized as crucial in fostering diverse and inclusive discourse, and the role of education in anchoring societal values, such as Sikhi principles, was highlighted.

- Concerns about transnational oppression, particularly in the case of India's actions, were raised, with frustrations about international responses to these issues.

The panellists also discussed strategies to combat polarization, promote civic engagement, and preserve democracy, emphasizing public involvement in shaping a more inclusive political future, especially with students.

## **Day 1 Summary**

Summit Co-Chair Dr. Satpal Singh delivered a thoughtful and eloquent summary of the day's presentations and panel discussions, emphasizing the key insights and takeaways. He highlighted the most significant points raised throughout the sessions and reminded attendees of the ongoing need for dialogue on the critical issues discussed. His closing remarks underscored the importance of sustaining the momentum and addressing these pressing challenges through continued engagement and collaboration.

## **DINNER - Fireside Chat with The Honourable Harjit Singh Sajjan**

Moderated by Neesha Kaur Hothi, GNI Advisor for Marketing & Communications, the dinner event featured a captivating fireside chat with The Honourable Harjit Singh Sajjan, President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada. During the conversation, Minister Sajjan shared insights into his personal journey, reflecting on his experiences in leadership, particularly in handling crises. He highlighted the importance of resilience, collaboration, and innovation in overcoming challenges.

The session offered attendees a rare and intimate glimpse into how Minister Sajjan's Sikh values have deeply influenced his approach to public service. His reflections underscored the significance of service to others, humility, and integrity in his work, providing an inspiring narrative of how these principles have guided him through his career in times of both adversity and triumph. This thoughtful discussion left the audience with a profound understanding of the connection between personal values and leadership in times of crisis.

## **Awards and Recognitions**

Before the day concluded, the GNI sponsors (Basant Motors, Gurdwara Gursagar Mastuana Sahib, Wildrose Garments, Gill Hospitality, Sundher Group, Kohaly Printers and Skyview Insurance) were acknowledged for their generous support, which was pivotal in making the event possible. A particularly moving moment followed with the presentation of a special Philanthropy Award to the highly deserving dear friend and dedicated Panthic sevadar, Major (Ret'd) Jasbeer Singh. This recognition was in honour of his extraordinary contribution in single-handedly financing the majority of Phase 1 of the "Gurbani Arth Milaan" project. His commitment provided the resources necessary to employ 33 research scholars for over two and a half years, enabling them to carry out invaluable work.

What made this gesture even more remarkable was that Major Jasbeer Singh dedicated the funding in loving memory of his late wife, Deena Ji, adding a deeply personal and emotional dimension to his philanthropy. This heartfelt tribute was a beautiful reminder of the profound impact one can make when driven by love and commitment to a meaningful cause.

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For the organizers and volunteers, the day truly never ends. Despite returning home around midnight after a long and demanding first day, they came back the next morning with renewed energy and cheerful attitudes, ready to warmly welcome participants for Day 2. Their dedication and enthusiasm were evident as they continued to ensure that every aspect of the event ran smoothly, embodying the spirit of service and commitment that made the conference a success.

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## Day 2 - September 29, 2024

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As is customary, the second day of the summit commenced with the *Ardas* led by Dr. Paramjit Kaur. In this prayer, she expressed heartfelt gratitude to Waheguru for the success and fruitful discussions of the previous day while also seeking divine guidance and blessings for the day's proceedings and for the future endeavours of GNI and the participants. Her *Ardas* served as both a spiritual grounding and a collective aspiration, setting a tone of reflection and reverence as attendees prepared for the important dialogues and scholarly engagements that lay ahead. Through this invocation, the gathering was reminded of the importance of humility, focus, and unity in their collective pursuit of knowledge and progress.

### Opening Remarks

Dr. Kamaljit Kaur Sidhu, the Master of Ceremonies, commenced Day 2 by acknowledging our gratitude for being able to work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Musqueam, Qayqayt, Tsleil-Waututh, and Tsawwassen First Nations. She warmly welcomed the delegates, providing a brief overview of Day 1 and expressing her appreciation for how smoothly the event had progressed. Dr. Sidhu thanked all participants for their dedication in arriving early on Sunday. Following this, she introduced Dr. Paramjit Kaur to lead the *Ardas*, seeking the Guru's blessings for the day and beyond, before introducing Dr. Satpal Singh, co-chair of the summit.

Summit Co-Chair Dr. Satpal Singh, Professor Emeritus of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the State University of New York, Buffalo, USA, delivered a warm and engaging welcome to the attendees, establishing an optimistic and collaborative atmosphere for the day's proceedings. He highlighted the essential need for sustained collaboration between Sikh scholars and international researchers, stressing the profound intersection of educational research with

societal progress. This nexus, he argued, plays a critical role in shaping societal interactions on a global scale.

Dr. Singh delved into several key themes, notably the imperative to decolonize education and the enduring relevance of the *Zafarnama*, a symbol of resilience and justice. He also brought attention to the often-neglected Bagri Sikh community in Pakistan, calling for increased scholarly focus and recognition of their contributions. Additionally, he addressed the pressing issue of mental health within the Sikh community, drawing attention to the damaging stigma that fosters silence and impedes open discourse.

Much of his address was dedicated to the youth, whom he described as the torchbearers of Sikhi's future. He emphasized that their perspectives and actions today will define the trajectory of the faith in the coming decades. Dr. Singh highlighted the necessity of cultivating the ability to envision new possibilities as a vital skill for the next generation.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Singh reflected on the aspirational vision of establishing Guru Nanak University in Canada, a project imbued with both ambition and promise. He encouraged the attendees to remain driven by curiosity and innovation, echoing the famous maxim, "*Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish.*"

### **Keynote: Decolonizing Education - Spaces of Inclusion, Innovation, and Creative Thinking**

In her keynote presentation, Dr. Manjeet Kaur Ramgotra, a Faculty Member at the University of London, delved into the transformative power of decolonizing the curriculum. Drawing from her extensive experience, she framed decolonization as a crucial step toward reshaping educational spaces to be more inclusive, innovative, and capable of fostering creative thinking. This process, she argued, is not just about diversifying content but fundamentally about rethinking how knowledge is constructed, who gets to be heard, and how learning spaces can be reimaged.

Dr. Ramgotra's approach includes recontextualizing existing knowledge frameworks, reconceptualizing academic disciplines, introducing marginalized or neglected thinkers, and imagining new pathways for institutional change. These efforts aim to challenge entrenched power dynamics in education and to create intellectual spaces where diverse perspectives can flourish, inspiring both critical thinking and creative problem-solving.

Central to her presentation was the example of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), which adopted a formal vision in 2017 to decolonize its university structure. This initiative, she explained, sought to dismantle long-standing Eurocentric biases and establish a curriculum that values a broader range of intellectual traditions and voices. SOAS vision challenges what is taught and how and why certain knowledge is prioritized.

While the potential for inclusion and creativity is vast, Dr. Ramgotra identified several key challenges in decolonization. One significant issue is the ongoing debate over what constitutes valid knowledge and the expectations of what students should learn. Traditional academic

disciplines often have rigid frameworks that limit opportunities for innovation and the inclusion of non-Western or marginalized perspectives.

Institutional constraints, such as sector-wide regulations and disciplinary expectations, further complicate efforts to introduce more inclusive content. Cooperation between departments can be difficult, and there is the risk of diluting the core principles of decolonization in an effort to meet institutional demands. Additionally, Dr. Ramgotra highlighted the practical challenges educators face, including their own knowledge limitations, the time and resources required to reconceptualize courses, and the resistance they may encounter from both students and colleagues who are uncomfortable with or resistant to change.

A nuanced analysis of these challenges reveals that decolonizing education is not only an intellectual endeavour but also a deeply emotional and political one. Resistance often stems from the discomfort of confronting deeply embedded systems of power, privilege, and exclusion. As Dr. Ramgotra noted, the question is, *will it work?* looms large. The process is arduous, requiring time, sustained effort, and collaboration across multiple stakeholders. Yet, she emphasized that the very act of trying—of pushing boundaries and challenging the status quo—is itself a form of success. It opens up new spaces of inclusion, innovation, and creative thinking that, over time, can transform the educational landscape.

In closing, Dr. Ramgotra urged the audience to see decolonizing education not as an endpoint but as an ongoing journey. The road may be fraught with challenges, but the potential rewards—both for students and society as a whole—make the effort worthwhile. Through this process, we can create educational spaces that truly reflect the diversity and richness of human knowledge, fostering an environment where all voices are valued and where innovation and creativity can thrive.

#### **Presentations:**

##### **1. Reconstructing the Zafarnama with Contemporaneous Manuscript Evidence** **Speaker:**

Dr. Harpreet Singh, a Research Scholar at Harvard University, presented groundbreaking research on the historical manuscripts of the *Zafarnama*, a letter written by Guru Gobind Singh to Emperor Aurangzeb. His talk delved into previously unexplored territory, using contemporaneous evidence to reconstruct this key text in Sikh history and offering fresh insights into its significance.

Dr. Singh began by providing crucial historical context. The *Zafarnama* was written after the Battle of Chamkaur to awaken Emperor Aurangzeb's conscience, much like the spirit of Babar Bani, specifically comparing the dynamics of *Das Trakhan* versus Bhai Lala. Delivered by Bhai Daya Singh, the earliest Sikh sources, *Sri Guru Sobha*(1708) and *Parchian Sewa Das* (1709), mention this pivotal event. In response, Aurangzeb issued two *Hasbu'l Hums*(royal edicts), preserved later in *Ahkam-i 'Alamagiri* (c. 1712), instructing Wazir Khan, the Faujdar of Sirhind, and Munim Khan, the Deputy Governor, to grant safe passage to Guru Gobind Singh.

Dr. Singh continued elaborating on how the mace-bearer Mohammad Beg and the *mansabdar* Shaikh Muhammad War were dispatched to escort Bhai Daya Singh and the Guru from Punjab to Deccan. However, news arrived that Aurangzeb had died before they could complete their mission.

Dr. Singh revisited the last major attempt by Dr. Ganda Singh in 1949 to create a definitive version of the *Zafarnama*, pointing out significant issues. He noted that 18% of the verses had either incorrect meter or lacked the essential *qafiya* (rhyme scheme). Furthermore, many verses suffered from grammatical or interpretative inaccuracies. For example, he provided a detailed analysis of the Jammu Birh manuscript from 1765, highlighting how deviations in meter and rhyme impacted the text's meaning.

He meticulously traced the historical timeline of *Zafarnama* manuscripts, from its earliest form in 1696 through updated versions in the 18th century, displaying the original writings on screen. He clarified that the *Zafarnama* was appended to the 1696 manuscript later on. His comparative analysis demonstrated how variations between these manuscripts led to different interpretations of key passages.

Dr. Singh's research methodology was rigorous, prioritizing the earliest manuscripts from the early 1700s. According to his criteria, each verse had to meet the following standards:

- Correct grammar
- Proper meter, specifically *Muttaqarib-imhazuf*
- Existence of *qafiya*, or rhyming ends of verses
- Conceptual coherence of verses
- The integrity of each verse, with no synthetic verses constructed by piecing together fragments from different manuscripts.

One of the most significant challenges Dr. Singh posed to current scholarship involved verses 58-61 of the *Zafarnama*, where many scholars, including Paira Singh Padam and Randhir Singh, interpret Guru Gobind Singh as quoting Aurangzeb, who invites the Guru to Kangar and offers him a *mansabdari* (rank) of 1,000 horses. Dr. Singh's research, however, contests this interpretation, revealing numerous discrepancies that do not align with historical or textual evidence.

Dr. Singh's research was groundbreaking, leaving the audience in awe. Most attendees were hearing these revelations for the first time, and the depth of his analysis sparked significant interest. He is currently negotiating with [Harvard Press](#) for publication.

## Break

After hearing such powerful and thought-provoking presentations, including the keynote address and the *Zafarnama* discussions, the attendees needed a moment to pause and reflect. We took

a short break to digest the insights shared and engage in meaningful conversations about the ongoing research efforts, allowing time for deeper contemplation and exchange of ideas.

### **Virtual Convocation**

What a milestone moment to celebrate our first-ever virtual convocation for the completion of the "Frontline Management" program! A total of 27 students successfully graduated. While several other programs are in progress and nearing completion, this event is truly historic, marking the first cohort to graduate from Guru Nanak Institute (GNI). Dr. Paramjit Kaur delivered an inspiring speech highlighting the transformative power of education. As Dr. Paramjit Kaur announced each graduate's name, virtual photographs were displayed on screens. Families, friends, and attendees joined the celebration, making this occasion memorable.

## **2. Overcoming Barriers: Struggles and Solutions for Bagri Sikhs in Pakistan**

Dr. Sagarjeet Singh, a practicing physician and research scholar from Pakistan, provided a compelling overview of the struggles faced by the Bagri Sikh community in Pakistan. As a minority group, the Bagri Sikhs face significant challenges in accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment. Dr. Singh's presentation shed light on the ongoing struggles and emerging solutions to support this marginalized community.

The Bagri Sikh and Hindu communities primarily reside in the Sindh and Balochistan regions, where they work to preserve their cultural and religious traditions through small village gurdwaras. Despite these efforts, the children of these communities face numerous obstacles to receiving an education. These barriers include deep-rooted poverty, frequent migration in search of economic opportunities, and entrenched caste-based discrimination.

A major factor worsening their situation is the lack of respect and acceptance from local Sindhi Sikhs and Nankpanthis, which further isolates the Bagri community. Living in makeshift homes under deprived conditions, they have recently been hit by severe flooding in Sindh, which has destroyed homes and worsened health issues among children. This has made access to education even more difficult for families already struggling with daily survival.

Dr. Singh outlined key solutions to address these educational challenges:

- 1. Improving Access to Schools:** He emphasized the need to encourage Bagri children to enroll in government schools by addressing the bullying and discrimination they face.
- 2. Economic and Social Support:** Providing financial and social assistance to families was identified as crucial to overcoming barriers to regular school attendance.
- 3. Community Advocacy:** Dr. Singh stressed the importance of promoting awareness within the community to highlight the value of education and encourage greater participation.

The presentation also recognized the efforts of Bhai Rajveer Singh, an ex-Head Granthi, who has been a strong advocate for the Bagri Sikh community. His work, which focused on raising awareness, providing spiritual guidance, and supporting educational initiatives, served as a model for community leadership in addressing the barriers faced by this marginalized group.

In conclusion, Dr. Singh's analysis called for targeted interventions to break the cycle of poverty, discrimination, and isolation hindering Bagri children's educational opportunities. Through a combination of economic support, community engagement, and systemic changes within educational institutions, these initiatives aim to uplift the Bagri community and provide their children with the education they deserve.

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

Nimrita Kaur Bahia, a psychologist and faculty member at Coventry University, presented an analysis of the growing mental health challenges faced by the UK Sikh community. She focused on the silent struggles driven by social stigma, cultural expectations, and a lack of awareness. She emphasized the need for collaboration between Sikh institutions and mental health practitioners to offer culturally sensitive support systems.

Nimrita began by highlighting the demographics of the UK Sikh population, which totals 525,865 or 0.9% of the total population. The majority of this community resides in the West Midlands, particularly in Birmingham and Wolverhampton, with a large portion being between 30 and 50 years old. She explained how cultural and migratory experiences influence mental health challenges in this age group. Nimrita referred to existing literature, identifying acculturation stress, migration trauma, and language barriers as contributors to mental health issues in South Asian communities. However, she stressed that social stigma remains the primary barrier preventing Sikhs from seeking mental health care.

The social stigma surrounding mental health is prevalent in the Sikh community, creating shame and reluctance to discuss struggles openly. Nimrita referenced reports like the British Sikh Report (2023), which showed an increase in mental health issues within the community, often attributed to life stress. However, deeper analysis revealed significant differences in how mental health is experienced across genders and age groups.

Sikh women, she noted, are more likely to be diagnosed with mental health issues, often related to isolation, loneliness, and financial dependence. They are frequently burdened by cultural expectations that limit their ability to express emotional needs. In contrast, Sikh men are less frequently diagnosed but often seek help for substance-related issues, which can mask underlying mental health struggles. Men face pressures linked to hypermasculinity, racial harassment, and marital difficulties, which surface indirectly in clinical settings.

Nimrita also pointed out the generational differences in how mental health is understood. Younger Sikhs often lack the emotional literacy in Punjabi to communicate their struggles, resulting in a disconnect with older generations who may not acknowledge mental health issues. Many young Sikhs feel trapped by cultural expectations that discourage emotional expression. On the other hand, older Sikhs (65+) tend to equate mental health issues with physical disabilities, further complicating discussions and support-seeking behaviours in this group.

Sikh students in higher education face particular vulnerabilities. Nimrita explained that they often feel isolated due to cultural stigma, and mental health services at universities are not always equipped to address the specific needs of these students. She called for culturally sensitive mental health support in academic institutions.

In concluding her presentation, Nimrita advocated for a culturally conscious approach to mental health care within the Sikh community. She emphasized the need for mental health practitioners to understand the cultural and linguistic barriers that shape how mental health issues are expressed. Nimrita shared examples of community-driven initiatives, stressing the importance of safe spaces where individuals can discuss mental health without fear of judgment. She highlighted the need for collaboration between mental health professionals and Sikh leaders to develop inclusive support systems.

### **Lunch & Group Picture**

This break allowed for informal networking, relaxation, and a group photo session, capturing most of the event's attendees and fostering community connections.

### **Panel. 4: Family Mental Health: Everyone Matters**

This mental health panel, moderated by Nimrita Kaur Bahia, addressed deeply personal and sensitive issues in a supportive environment. The discussion allowed attendees to explore the complexities of mental health, particularly within the South Asian community in Vancouver. By focusing on both clinical data and personal stories, the panelists shed light on the causes of mental health struggles and suggested potential solutions.

The conversation began by defining mental health in the context of Vancouver. Mental health was described not merely as the absence of illness but as a state of well-being where individuals can manage stress, work productively, and contribute to their community. The panelists emphasized that modern societal pressures, cultural expectations, and substance abuse are significant contributors to rising mental health issues like depression and anxiety, particularly within South Asian families.

#### **Key Panelists and Their Insights:**

- 1. Dr. Gurvinder Singh Warrya (Clinical Perspective):** Dr. Warrya highlighted the financial and emotional cost of depression in Canada, estimating an annual toll of \$49 billion. He noted that 5% of Canadians experience at least one episode of depression, with anxiety affecting about 12% of people worldwide. Among South Asians, he observed a growing prevalence of depression and substance abuse, particularly among young adults. Dr. Warrya stressed the intergenerational impact of untreated mental health issues, noting how depression in mothers can affect their children's well-being.

2. **Tejinder Singh Gill (Grassroots Mental Health Worker):** Tejinder shared his experiences working on the front lines for over 20 years. He noted that the South Asian community now faces the highest rates of mental health issues in Vancouver, even surpassing the Indigenous population. He emphasized the rise of gang violence among youth, which stems from disconnection, lack of role models, and parental absence due to work. Tejinder stressed the importance of early intervention, strong family support, and monitoring young people to prevent mental health issues from escalating.
3. **Dr. Prabhleen Kaur Sandhu (Childhood and Parenting Focus):** Dr. Sandhu emphasized the critical role of parenting and early childhood experiences in mental health. She highlighted the need for nurturing, quality time with children, and breaking cycles of emotional neglect within families. Dr. Sandhu also addressed the struggles faced by international students, who often deal with diverse parenting styles and behavioral expectations, making adjustment difficult and leading to mental health challenges.
4. **Loveleen Kaur Walia (Lived Experience):** Loveleen shared her personal story of resilience, having endured severe levels of abuse and emotional neglect at home. Her experiences highlighted the long-term effects of childhood trauma and the difficulty of socializing and feeling safe in such circumstances. She underscored the dangers of lionizing resilience, urging that everyone deserves help and healing rather than being expected to "push forward" despite suffering.

#### **Common Themes and Takeaways:**

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The panel emphasized the importance of culturally sensitive mental health care. In South Asian communities, the stigma around mental illness and the normalization of harmful behaviours like substance abuse often prevent people from seeking help.
- **Family Support:** The family was highlighted as a central factor in mental health. A connected, supportive family system acts as a protective factor, while disconnection, neglect, and absentee parenting contribute to the development of mental health issues.
- **Early Intervention and Education:** Early detection of mental health issues, along with education on the signs and symptoms, is crucial in preventing severe cases. Schools, parents, and communities need to work together to support early intervention.
- **Breaking Cycles of Trauma:** Addressing trauma and emotional neglect in families was a major focus. The panellists agreed that mental health is a collective family issue and that healing must happen within the family system.

In conclusion, this panel discussion shed light on the mental health challenges faced by the South Asian community in Vancouver, especially among youth and families. By integrating professional insights and lived experiences, the panellists emphasized the need for culturally

conscious mental health care, family support, and early intervention. These steps are essential to helping the community heal from the often-silent mental health crises affecting many individuals.

**Recommendations:**

- Encourage connection and communication between parents and children.
- Educate families about mental health issues and offer support.
- Provide children with time, attention, and love (Pyar).
- Allow children to play and bond with family members.
- Encourage introspection and emotional awareness to build stronger connections within the family.

## 5. Youth Voices (TED Talk Format)

GNI takes pride in encouraging students and youth to become actively involved in research, management, and leadership, preparing them to be future leaders. To foster this growth, providing them with the space and platform to express their ideas and share their insights is essential. This session was designed to do just that, offering young speakers the opportunity to inspire their peers and all attendees.

From several submissions, three passionate students—Jasmine Kaur Sidhu, Mankarman Singh, and Simar Kaur Shoker—were chosen to present their talks, each focusing on topics that resonate not only with the Sikh community but also with broader societal concerns. They offered fresh perspectives on the challenges young people face today, addressing Sikh principles, the immigrant experience, and the importance of preserving language. Additionally, they delved into critical issues like youth mental health, identity, and social issues, shedding light on how these factors shape the experiences and aspirations of the younger generation.

Each speaker delivered their message with passion and clarity, reflecting the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of Sikh youth. Their presentations were thought-provoking and deeply personal, leaving a lasting impact on the audience. Through their diverse topics, they highlighted the importance of maintaining cultural identity, addressing mental health, empowering youth to contribute to the community's progress and how SSA at UBC was contributing to the well-being of students, particularly international students. This session exemplified GNI's commitment to nurturing young leaders who will shape the future with their knowledge, empathy, and vision.

### Break

The final tea (chah) and pakora break provided participants with a chance to reflect on the sessions, engage in further networking, and recharge for the next panel.

## **6. Panel: Imagining Guru Nanak University in Canada**

Moderated by Dr. Satvir Singh, this panel focused on the vision of establishing Guru Nanak University (GNI) in Canada. The discussion featured insights from Dr. Baljit Singh, Dr. Chris Campbell, Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains. Gian Singh spoke of his and GNI's team's vision and reflected on Dr. Summerlee's keynote address. Dr. Summerlee outlined the step-by-step process for founding a new university and highlighted the challenges involved. Although time was limited, the panel covered key topics such as the academic, cultural, and social significance of creating an institution rooted in Sikh values.

One key theme of the discussion was the importance of making GNI a supportive and attractive choice for students. Dr. Bains emphasized the success of the "2 and 2" model, which involves two years at GNI and two years at partner universities, as a pathway for students to access higher education. She stressed that GNI must establish a strong administrative board and offer distinctive, high-caliber courses to stand out in the competitive landscape of Canadian higher education.

Dr. Campbell addressed the question of how GNI would differentiate itself when students have so many options. He suggested that GNI should define unique fields of study not available elsewhere and focus on decolonizing the curriculum—building on a foundation of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) that has been part of Sikh philosophy for 500 years. Dr. Campbell also highlighted the need for GNI to collaborate with other academic institutions, positioning itself as a bridge between public universities and offering programs that cannot be found elsewhere. He suggested making this a community-based university.

Dr. Baljit Singh pointed out that Canada already has 97 universities, each offering a broad range of degrees, and noted that the quality of education across these institutions is relatively homogenous. The real difference, he argued, lies not in the curriculum itself but in how it is delivered—through the quality of the faculty, the engagement of students, and the overall learning experience. GNI, with its foundation in Sikh values, will not be a theology-based university but rather a center for exploring deeper issues and solutions that benefit society as a whole. According to Dr. Singh, GNI could become a "nursery" for the next generation of leaders, equipping them with the tools to solve the world's most pressing problems. Bringing top-notch minds to teach and top-flight executives is the heart of any institute.

The panel also touched on research priorities, community impact, and the need for GNI to develop collaborations with other academic institutions. By doing so, GNI could define itself as a pioneering institution that not only meets the needs of its students but also provides answers to complex, unique challenges.

## **7. Summit Closing Summary**

Dr. Baljit Singh eloquently summarized the day's presentations and key discussions, expressing heartfelt gratitude for everyone's contributions. He noted that capturing the depth of emotional and intellectual investment put into this event is a challenge. The journey we have all been part

of is deeply personal, and it has been remarkable to see the blend of intellect and emotion throughout the summit.

He reflected on the arduous process of crafting this summit's agenda. Beginning last November, the planning team worked tirelessly to identify and engage the scholars who would bring their unique insights to this gathering. It has been a labour of love, one that brought together incredible presenters and panellists, each contributing to the broader community dialogue we've fostered here.

Dr. Singh emphasized that what we witnessed today is part of the larger vision of building a university—Guru Nanak University, a dream that is not just for today but for generations to come. This vision, which begins with conversations like those we have had today, will evolve. Next year's summit might look different, but the foundation is being laid now.

He particularly focused on the responsibility we bear as a community, especially concerning the younger generation and their role in changing the world with values and vision. Mental health was a recurring theme throughout the panels—an issue that has become more complex within our community, especially for international students and their personal struggles. How we, as a community, address these challenges—whether it is lateral violence or political sentiments towards international students—will shape the future.

Dr. Singh also touched upon Dr. Ramgatra's inspiring keynote address and how implementing some of these ideas will be critical for the path forward. He reminded everyone that while the summit may be concluding, the real work begins tomorrow.

The creation of Guru Nanak University is essential for the Sikh community. Dr. Singh commended everyone for their efforts, especially acknowledging the wisdom and grace of Dr. Satpal Singh, whose standing in the scientific community and in interfaith dialogue has been a beacon of Sikh values. Knowing and working with him has been a blessing for all of us.

He extended his appreciation to GNI staff, the volunteers, and everyone behind the scenes, including the team that managed logistics, food, and hospitality. Special thanks went out to the professors who came to deliver their thoughts, often covering their own expenses. Lastly, a heartfelt appreciation for Neesha, whose work in building and scheduling the entire program has been nothing short of phenomenal.

In closing, Dr. Singh emphasized the intentional design of the summit's structure, highlighting Dr. Summerlee's keynote followed by the final panel on GNI's vision. This sequence was carefully planned to demonstrate the thoughtful progression of topics and how each panel seamlessly built upon the previous one. Dr. Singh reiterated that this summit marks the beginning of something far greater—a shared journey towards realizing the ambitious vision of Guru Nanak University.

## 8. The End

Dr. Kamaljit Kaur Sidhu brought the event to a thoughtful close by expressing her sincere gratitude to all the speakers, panellists, and participants for their valuable contributions. She emphasized the significance of the discussions that had taken place and the exciting vision for Guru Nanak University that had been shared throughout the event. Dr. Sidhu highlighted the collaborative spirit that is essential to turning this vision into a reality and wished everyone success in their ongoing efforts.

In her final remarks, she encouraged everyone to continue the momentum, reminding them that the ideas shared during the event represent the first steps in a long and impactful journey. With heartfelt thanks, Dr. Sidhu expressed her appreciation to the organizing team, sponsors, and attendees, reiterating the importance of collective effort in building an institution that will benefit future generations.

The event officially concluded with farewells, and Dr. Sidhu's closing thoughts left the audience inspired and motivated to work together toward the establishment of Guru Nanak University in Canada.

### **My personal invitation to the 2025 International Research Summit**

Get ready for the 2025 summit, tentatively planned for September! For those interested in submitting research topics and abstracts, now is the time to start preparing, especially for participants coming from outside North America. Visa processing is currently taking 4-5 months, and unfortunately, many of you who applied late missed this year's summit. However, I am pleased to say that most of you have now received your visas. Let's ensure everyone is prepared in time for next year!

May Waheguru Bless you all!

*Gian Singh*

**Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies**

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