

STRENGTHENING THE INTER-FAITH BRIDGES

in Burnaby



DECEMBER 2012 / JANUARY 2013

STRENGTHENING INTER-FAITH BRIDGES IN BURNABY HOSTS "INSPIRING" COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

"Inter-faith dialogue can help us lose our fear, and learn to embrace others."

-Questions of Faith participant

It was a dark and stormy night, and yet nearly 40 participants from Burnaby's diverse faith communities came together on November 29th to discuss **Questions of Faith**. This dialogue, the first in a series sponsored by the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT), brought together members of the Sikh, Islamic, Christian, Baha'i, Buddhist, and Jewish communities. The discussion included participants from community organizations and public services along with others, who, while having no faith affiliation, are interested in the value of faith in building a stronger, more cohesive city.

The dialogue session is part of the **Strengthening Inter-Faith Bridges** in Burnaby project, which seeks to create greater understanding between faith groups in order to create a more welcoming and inclusive community in Burnaby. This project, a follow-up to the 2010 Building Inter-faith Bridges project, is intended to stimulate dialogue, leading to the development of an inter-faith action plan, which will be led by members of Burnaby's faith groups.

Panelists at the Questions of Faith session (**Wanda Mulholland** from Burnaby's Task Force on Homelessness, **Yasmin Jamal**, an ESL educator and member of the Ismaili community, and **Lindsey bat Joseph** from the Sol Mark Centre for Jewish Excellence) spoke eloquently of the importance of faith in their personal, professional, and community lives. Mulholland described ongoing inter-faith work already taking place through the homelessness task force, and the invaluable contribution it makes to Burnaby residents who are homeless or living in extreme poverty. Jamal described the vital role that faith had played in her own settlement process as an immigrant, and how it motivates her to give back to her community through her work as a teacher and community volunteer. Rabbi bat

Joseph shared the ways that faith is inextricably interwoven into every aspect of her life, and her identity.

Inspired by these personal reflections, participants then met in small groups to tackle questions of faith together. Despite strongly held and sometimes differing experiences and views, some very interesting and insightful themes emerged:

- Faith can be understood as a set of core values that provide both a foundation and direction in our lives. It helps us to understand who we are and why we are here.
- Inter-faith creates an opportunity to teach and learn about ourselves and others, helping us to move from ignorance to tolerance to acceptance, and ultimately to love for each other. It can create a sense of shared humanity, breaking down artificial barriers that separate us, and prevent us from working together. Inter-faith helps to accomplish together what we might not be able to do alone.

Participants also identified many ways for Burnaby's diverse faith groups to work together. Sharing resources and building a support network for newcomers to Burnaby are two examples. Continuing to work together on homelessness and to reach out with compassion to those living with mental health challenges was also mentioned.

The discussions at this first session definitely sparked interest in exploring **More Questions of Faith** as we move forward with the **Strengthening Inter-Faith Bridge** project. More information about the next dialogue session is can be found on the next page of this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you there.

STRENGTHENING BRIDGES ADVISORY COMMITTEE CONTINUES TO GROW

Our Advisory Committee continues to grow, reflecting Burnaby's rich faith diversity:

- Toru Yokoi
- Tazul Nisha Ali
- Lindsey bat Joseph
- Janice Greenidge Bexson
- James Grunau
- Wanda Mulholland
- David Ali
- Yasmin Jamal
- Edel Toner-Rogala
- Rajinder Singh Pandher
- Rebekah Mahaffey
- Don Dyck
- Kimiko Karpoff
- Kevan Oxley
- Simin Fani
- Ray Allen
- Sara Shaw
- Jean Wenjin Zhou
- Ivory Xi
- Ling Chu

Members of this committee provide advice and guidance to the Strengthening Bridges project team. We welcome people from all faiths who are interested in building a strong inter-faith community in Burnaby. If you live, work, play, study, teach, or worship in Burnaby, and would like to contribute to our work as a member of the Advisory Committee, please contact Jan Taylor at jantaylor@shaw.ca.

STRENGTHENING BRIDGES BY SHARING INFORMATION

The **Strengthening Inter-Faith Bridges** project will create several newsletters over the next few months. If your faith group has information to share about upcoming events that would be of interest to others, we would be pleased to share it through these newsletters. We have a comprehensive distribution list that can help to get the word out. Please send your information to jantaylor@shaw.ca

THE MULTIFAITH CALENDAR

Great for those who want to learn more about world religions.

Today's society is both diverse and multicultural. Festivals and religious holidays are an important part of many peoples' lives. Being aware of these occasions can foster a community that is respectful, inclusive, and productive.

The Multifaith Calendar facilitates understanding of the religious occasions and festivals important to our diverse cultural communities. To order these great calendars, go to: <http://www.amssa.org/support-us/store/multifaith-calendar-orders>



This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

A BIG SHOUT OUT

Thank you to the **Burnaby Public Library** (especially the wonderful staff at the Tommy Douglas Branch) for providing space for our first community dialogue.

and

Thank you to Kimiko Karpoff for taking photos at the event. To see all the photos from the Questions of Faith dialogue session, please visit www.bipt.ca.

THE BURNABY INTERCULTURAL PLANNING TABLE PRESENTS: *Community Dialogue Session 2: More Questions of Faith*

DATE: Tuesday, February 5, 2013
TIME: 6:30 – 8:30 pm
(Registration & Refreshment at 5:30 pm)

LOCATION: Stay tuned for location details

TOPIC: *More Questions of Faith*

- What do we mean by faith?
- Is it the same as religion? Or spirituality?
- Is it OK to be a person-of-faith in today's society?
- What role, if any, does faith play in our humanity?
- How can we use our faith to live and work with others?

REGISTRATION:
This session is *FREE*, and everyone is welcome BUT pre-registration is required and early registration is strongly encouraged. To register, go to: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Inter_Faith_Dialogue_2

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?
The **Strengthening Bridges in Burnaby** project hosts a series of community dialogues to discuss ways that faith and inter-faith (different faiths working together) can make Burnaby a more welcoming and inclusive community. If you are interested in this topic, and in learning more about Burnaby's diverse faith groups, please join us for this important conversation.

For more information about the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table, please visit www.bipt.ca.