

The background features a stylized mountain range. The mountains are rendered in shades of blue and black, with white highlights suggesting snow or light reflecting off the peaks. A prominent red diagonal stripe runs across the scene, possibly representing a river or a path. The overall style is graphic and modern.

The Faith in Canada 150

**MILLENNIAL
SUMMIT**

Legacy book

Produced by the Faith in Canada
150 Millennial Summit Team.

Featuring the reflections, insights,
and reporting of 75 millennial
delegates of faith curated from
faith communities from coast to
coast on the occasion of the 150th
anniversary of Confederation.

Ottawa | June 28-30, 2017



JULY
2017



About this Legacy Book

July 2017 | Ottawa



In June 2017, the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit convened in Canada's capital city on the eve of the sesquicentennial anniversary celebrations. Bringing together 75 dynamic millennials of faith, joined together from coast to coast, delegates addressed the role of faith in public life, the true role of pluralism, and the importance of religious freedom in light of the 150th anniversary of confederation.

What unfolded over the next three days was historic and profound. Dynamic millennials at the forefront of various sectors including government, media, education, health care, community organizing, mentorship, ministry, policy formation, finance, business, literature, and sport, gathered together to address six major questions.

1. What is the public square, and who inhabits it?
2. Can faith be truly public?
3. How do we live our faith in genuine difference and work toward cultivating a genuine pluralism?
4. How does our faith contribute to our understanding and contribute to the common good?
5. What are the key challenges millennials of faith must address and contend with?
6. How can we move forward in faith and friendship?

As we reflected on the role that faith and faith communities have had on the nation we call home, we put our heads together to envision the role that faith can continue to play in the formation of Canadian society.

The following pages contain a narrative-form report of the conversations that unfolded over the course of the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit. As delegates gathered to reflect on history, look honestly at our nation's present reality, and cast a hopeful vision for the future, they formed deeply hopeful friendships and gave life to a network that will give shape to what is to come.

Interspersed between the narrative-form reports of each session are stories that give insight into a small representation of the dynamic group of 75 Canadian leaders of faith who contributed to the insights contained in this book. Our voices and stories have the power to encourage, inspire, and enlarge dialogue. May the stories enclosed in these pages welcome you into an increasingly hopeful vision for Canada's next 150 years.

We invite you to read the stories of these generous leaders and communities on the pages to follow. It is our hope that this legacy document gives birth to a renewed and vibrant pluralistic Canadian society that not only allows for but also encourages the intersection of faith with public Canadian life.

With thanks,

**The Faith in Canada 150
Millennial Summit Team**



Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit delegates gathered at the Global Centre for Pluralism.

Photo Credit: Asad Chishti of Chairs and Tables.

A Note on the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit Format

The Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit took place in several centres of academic, economic, community, and faith-focused thought. These included the Global Centre for Pluralism, the University of Ottawa's Telfer School of Business Management, and Cardus Ottawa.

Each day was organized according to sessions that addressed a particular question or theme central to considering the role of faith in public life, pluralism, and religious freedom. Chaired by two members of the Faith in Canada 150 Cabinet of Canadians, each session fostered intimate dialogue among delegates in small focus groups. Delegates reconvened at the end of each session to share from the richness of their individual and communal experience and insight.

Please note that all quotations herein are from delegates who attended the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit. Specific names are not attributed to individual quotations, as the representatives who made each statement were summarizing on behalf of their focus groups.

It is important to note that the thoughts enclosed in this document are the thoughts of specific millennial delegates and comprehensively reflect neither the thoughts of the faith communities of which they are a part nor the Faith in Canada 150 team.



Mr. Samuel Ladrón de Guevara
MILLENNIAL SUMMIT
JUNE 28, 2017

Miss Sara Masoud
MILLENNIAL SUMMIT
JUNE 28, 2017

Ms. Ashley Crowley
MILLENNIAL SUMMIT
JUNE 28, 2017

Ms. Sara Khurshid
MILLENNIAL SUMMIT
JUNE 28, 2017

Mr. Mohamed Hique
MILLENNIAL SUMMIT
JUNE 28, 2017

The Faith in Canada 150
**MILLENNIAL
SUMMIT**

Faith Is Not What I Do, It's My Identity



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

What Is the Public Square, and Who Inhabits It?

Chaired by Hannah Marazzi and Sam VanderVeer, the first session of the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit asked delegates to consider the nature, definition, and parameters of the public square. They were asked to consider questions such as, “What does it mean to be a millennial who is faithful?” and, “As millennials, how do we communicate our faith publicly?”

Here’s what the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit delegates told us.

1

Heritage

Millennial Canadians are engaging in the delicate process of seeking wisdom from their faith leaders, parents, and grandparents while also cultivating a faith robust enough to survive and thrive in an increasingly secular and digital world.

“There is that desire to both engage fully with the problems and challenges of our time and also to fully honour all of that rich religious heritage. We have to give birth to a new way of living, or a new language that perhaps our parents or grandparents in earlier generations didn’t even have.”

2

Where Is the Public Sphere?

While the public sphere most certainly refers to physical spaces of engagement, so too does it encompass an increasingly permeable digital sphere. This has transformed the public nature of faith and the way in which we articulate it.

“The public square has grown a lot. This is the place that we are expressing our faith. Social media is kind of our new public square, for this generation.”

3

Genuine & Generative Conversations

Millennials wonder about the ability of the online space—in an increasingly globalized world—to facilitate genuine and generative conversations regarding the true nature of faith.

“As millennials, the internet is a place where we are expressing our faith, and we need to consider, ‘Is that an authentic expression?’ There’s some risk online in communicating faith in regards to vulnerability, but it also serves as an opportunity to share authentic faith in a different way.”

4

Tolerance Versus Pluralism

Tolerance often connotes images of clinical open-mindedness with the potential for conflict due to a lack of connection if disagreement arises. Pluralism requires that Canadians engage with and seek to understand one another amid all their diversity.

“There’s a difference between pluralism and tolerance. Pluralism is the result of living together and growing up together. Pluralism has really defined the Canadian experience. Tolerance is more of a façade. When tolerance is preached, it really suggests enduring something that we can’t change. That’s a pretty low bar, if that’s the one our society holds. What does it mean to respect communities of faith different from ours, or for people who aren’t parts of communities of faith to begin to understand what it means to be a person of faith?”

5

Courage

It takes bravery to be a person of faith in an increasingly secularized world. Fear of offending others, being intellectually discounted, or letting down one’s faith community as a public representative continues to worry millennials of faith.

“Publicly representing our faith takes a lot of courage. For some of us, we would rather not be a living, walking, talking representation of our faith, in fear of making a mistake or portraying it wrongly.”

6

Education

The effort to create an increasingly neutral education system that is inclusive and politically correct comes with a cost. It causes a reduction in religious literacy and makes it more difficult for faithful Canadians to articulate their faith in academic settings.

“In order for our society to be more pluralistic and welcoming of different orders and different religions, we need to educate, not make education benign in any religious conversation. We need to see our schools as the public’s square, and we need to allow for and educate children from a young age on the diversity of our nation.”

7

Misperception

Public professions of faith can be risky in social, professional, and otherwise public situations. Any misperceptions of a person's faith identity may result in discrimination.

"The sense of maybe being judged or stereotyped or boxed into a particular place that isn't reflective of how you see your own faith has emerged over the course of our discussion."

8

Agency

Millennials who don't identify with a particular faith face a challenge in the public sphere. The decision regarding whether to take ownership of a faith tradition requires a sense of agency. Many consider daily, "Will I take hold of my faithful identity in this setting?"

"There are those of us who don't obviously present as coming from a particular faith tradition. We have the ability therefore to choose whether we want to own that label in a public space."

9

Posture

Delegates spoke openly of the current political climate and how disheartening it is to see conversations about faith and identity become increasingly polarized.

"It is essential to cultivate a personal understanding of our own journey, and our own beliefs, and our own faith traditions deeply, so that we can enter the public square not in a posture of defence, but in a posture of belief, comfort, and willingness to have dialogue with other people."



Bhante Saranpala

**What role does religious faith play in your life?
Why is it important to you?**

The Buddhist faith has made me a better person, a happier person, a kinder and more compassionate person, and a more generous person through my commitment to monastic life and public services. I have been a Buddhist monk for over thirty-three years, and religious faith has played a very important role in my life over three decades to become who I am today. To me, the purpose of religious faith is not only to reduce human suffering but also to remove all roots that cause human suffering. To me, the purpose of religious faith is to help everyone go from darkness to light and to go from light to light.

“ I am bringing back a sense of hope, inclusiveness, mutual respect, and understanding of all faiths. ”

What drew you to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit?

Well, I heard about the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit from a friend who encouraged me to attend a Faith in Canada 150 meeting that took place at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Representatives from all faiths were present at this meeting. In the discussion, one thing became very clear: faith matters. As we were looking forward to celebrate Canada 150, I thought the Millennial Summit would be a great and ideal venue to attend and make contributions from the Canadian Buddhist community. I was eager to attend the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit, and I am delighted that I was able to attend.

What are you bringing back to your community as a result of this experience?

I am bringing back a sense of hope, inclusiveness, mutual respect, and understanding of all faiths. I was delighted to meet millennials of all faiths and who came from across Canada. We had great conversations about the similarities and differences of our faiths. Millennials were curious about the significance of the saffron robe I was wearing as a Theravada Buddhist monk. I explained that the goal and purpose of my life as a Buddhist monk and of wearing this robe was to end all suffering and to realize Nibbana/Nirvana (utter freedom from suffering). To achieve this, I explained, I need to practice simplicity, detachment, letting go, renunciation, morality, meditation, and wisdom.



“ I now strongly believe that we can bring positive change to the people of this nation through faith. ”

How has your view changed regarding the role of faith in common and public life?

After listening to millennials of different faiths share about their experiences within their own traditions, I realized that the role of faith in common and public life really does matter. Being a part of this three-day summit, I now strongly believe that we can bring positive change to the people of this nation through faith. We need religious faith to cultivate good values like goodwill, love, kindness, compassion, honesty, integrity, generosity, and wisdom. Faith makes a person good as well as happy!

How would you say the Canadian approach to faith in public life could improve over the next 50 years, in time for Canada's 200th anniversary?

As millennials, if we continue to accept one another and if we can continue to hold more interfaith dialogues based on mutual respect and understanding, the everyday life of every Canadian citizen would see a marked improvement. I believe if millennials of all faiths can live up to their own moral principles over the next 50 years, Canada will emerge as the champion and a leading role model to other nations who will be inspired to follow Canada's uniqueness in the practice of religious faith.

Can Faith Be Truly Public?

Chaired by Cabinet of Canadians members Rev. Dr. Andrew Stirling and Dr. Janet Epp Buckingham, delegates were asked to consider ancillary questions such as, “Do millennials have a different understanding of private and public faith?” and, “How do we address faith on the fringes, such as extremism and how it enters the public space?”

Here’s what the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit delegates told us.

1

Humility

—

Millennials reaffirmed the importance of humility in bringing faith into the public square, calling it an essential ingredient to personal and communal relationship, and identifying it as a value common across faith traditions.

“We talked about humility and how in all our faith traditions, humility is something that we all are supposed to practice, but on social media and everything we often run into pride. People practicing humility are often on the back burner.”

2

With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

—

Delegates discussed the need to use social media while being aware of the responsibility that comes with such powerful communication potential.

“We spoke about social media primarily, and how with great power comes great responsibility. Social media is, in fact, a tool, and it can be used for good. It can be other-centred, discipline oriented, goodness driven, or it can be used for evil. It can be used as a medium for extremism or as confirmation bias. It can also feed our addiction, our need for love and for attention. And yet, you can also use it to tell your story; you can engage with others.”

3

Better Together

—

Millennials demonstrated an immediate and passionate sense of their interdependence and the need for reconciliation among faith communities in order to build a more vibrant, sustainable, and healthy future.

“We think that millennials are more open to discussion on reconciliation and coming together. We need to find a common narrative. We also need to carry the discussion further to talk about our differences. There’s a difference between tolerance, which I think stops the question, the dialogue, and actual acceptance of living together. We need to engage in knowing the things that connect us but also the things that do make us different. Being able to celebrate those and be okay with that is important.”

4

Language

Use of intentional and mutually defined language to engage in dialogue is essential to express faith publicly. Particular attention to nuance and etymology is essential for faith to exist within the public sphere.

"We emphasized the importance of having language to communicate faith within those different spheres and being conscious of our context. We each need to think. 'Okay we're in a place where if I'm with a faith community this word is going to mean something and I don't have to explain it, but if I'm in a place where people don't have that background, I need to be careful to be able to express myself well so to create dialogue rather than walls."

5

Getting to the Root

When addressing the uncomfortable question of faith at the fringes, such as extremism, millennials were quick to point out the need to get to the root causes of that radicalism.

"We discussed that fear is the root of extremism, which can cause further separation and seclusion of communities. In order to battle extremism and fear, we need to seek interaction and engagement with the world around us and different communities. Connection and relationship is what will bring us together and hopefully put an end to such extreme behaviour."

6

Uncomfortable Legacies

One of the challenges to the proclamation of faith in public spaces is the way those around us deal with personal histories that include a legacy of harm from those who have falsely employed or used a faith tradition to cause harm.

"We talked about restorative justice and the importance of honesty and recognizing that awful things have happened in the name of most all of our faiths. We need to be able to own those experiences and know that negative experiences people have felt as a result of our particular faith are valid. We need to move past a feeling of shame and move forward through dialogue."



The Faith in Canada 150
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To heal a nation,
we must first heal
the individuals, the
families and the
communities.

— ART SOLOMON
(1917-1997), Anishinaabe Elder





*Let's
Talk*

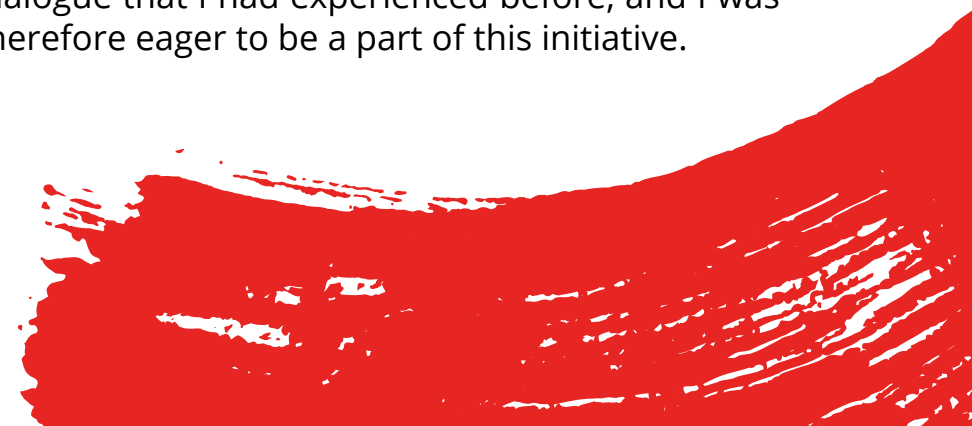
**What role does religious faith play in your life?
Why is it important to you?**

The place of faith in my life cannot be reduced to a mere role. Faith is an integral part of my identity that serves as a guiding force for all that I do. Beyond the individual religious practices and methods of worship, I try to structure my life in a way that is consistent with the Jewish worldview and standards of conduct. Judaism has deeply held beliefs regarding interpersonal interactions, integrity and contributing to the global community (Tikun Olam). I try my absolute best to live in a way that embodies those values and contribute positively to the various communities I am a part of.

***This delegate has requested that his responses remain anonymous.**

What drew you to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit?

The Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit appealed to me because it addressed issues that were relevant to all faith groups as distinct, diverse entities. The stated goals of the summit did not attempt to downplay the various, and sometimes mutually exclusive, differences among the groups present. Rather, it focused on the mutual issues faced by faith groups in Canada and channelled the Canadian values of pluralism and multiculturalism to do it. This was not an approach to multi-faith dialogue that I had experienced before, and I was therefore eager to be a part of this initiative.



What are you bringing back to your community as a result of this experience?

The Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit provided me with a new appreciation for how other faith groups struggle with both faith in the public square and the challenge of being faithful during an era of secularism and occasional hostility toward faith groups. Sometimes, when we are singularly focused on our own issues, we are unable to see the others dealing with the same challenges. There was a sense of commonality and ally-ship at the conference, and I left feeling as though I could offer my community a fresh perspective.

How has your view changed regarding the role of faith in common and public life?

I would not say my view of faith in common and public life has changed. Instead, I would say I have gained a new understanding and appreciation for how other Canadians live their faith publicly and interact with the public square. The summit's spirit of sharing and storytelling helped me understand how challenges I had only considered from my perspective, and that of my community, affected others and how they too sought to address them.

There was a sense of commonality and ally-ship at the conference, and I left feeling as though I could offer my community a fresh perspective.

How would you say the Canadian approach to faith in public life could improve over the next 50 years, in time for Canada's 200th anniversary?

If Canadian society could move from a stance of tolerance (sometimes a little grudging) to one of true pluralism and acceptance, that would be a meaningful improvement for Canada's 200th birthday. Too often, we adopt a stance of tolerance for the 'other' as opposed to true acceptance. In a pluralist and multicultural society such as Canada, we should strive to truly embrace the differences in our communities and utilize them as a vehicle for sharing and growth. While Canada is undoubtedly a world leader in fostering pluralist values, there is still plenty of room for improvement. If we as a community could truly learn to embrace our various parts and their differences, I believe it would make for a far stronger whole and a stronger Canada.

Eric Farr



**What role does religious faith play in your life?
Why is it important to you?**

My religious faith – that is, my understanding of the Bahá'í teachings and my efforts to put them into practice – plays a foundational role in my life. It helps me to understand who I am and that there is a reality to me and to everyone else. This reality is beyond the perception of the senses and is fundamentally spiritual, noble, good and beautiful. It helps me to understand that I am not an isolated individual, but that I am fully human when my thoughts and actions are shaped by and directed towards service to others. My faith fills my life with purpose, giving it meaning within communal, historical, and cosmic contexts. In this way, every moment is an opportunity to align my thoughts and actions with my true humanity through sacrificial service to better society.

What attracted you to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit?

I was drawn to the format of the summit and to the questions framing our discussions. Most interfaith events I've participated in, while ostensibly serving to bring faith-related conversations outside of the congregation into more public spaces, have tended to reinforce a conception of religion as basically interior, easily summarized by a set of fundamental tenets and ritual observances. The Millennial Summit created what felt like a new, distinctive space for public conversation about faith with people of faith from different backgrounds. Religion and faith live dynamic lives in history, contributing to the evolution of society and, in turn, evolving by it. The summit was so appealing to me because it was trying to understand a particular moment in the life of religion in Canada, seeking to grasp it from a diversity of vantage points, and, through thoughtful deliberation, begin to shape the course of its future development.

What are you bringing back to your community as a result of this experience?

More than anything else, the summit raised many questions that I will bring back to my community: how can young people of faith engage in fruitful discussion with others about the common good and

translate these discussions into concrete action? How can people of faith draw on the rich spiritual, moral and semantic resources of their traditions to offer meaningful and distinctive contributions to public discourse? How do the particular projects and priorities of different faith groups come to enrich, reinforce and influence the projects and priorities of other groups? How do we learn together about what is required to advance society?

How would you say the Canadian approach to faith in public life could improve over the next 50 years, in time for Canada's 200th anniversary?

Religion and faith are concerned not only with facts, but with truth. People of faith strive to understand and uphold the implications of a commitment to truth in their own lives. All facets of public life, including the Canadian approach to faith in public life, would improve by becoming more truth seeking. By demonstrating a commitment to an honest investigation of reality and by questioning the prevailing assumptions about humanity and society that underpin many attempts at social improvement, people of faith can make an important contribution to Canadian public life.

Living Our Faith in Difference: Toward Genuine Pluralism

We asked our delegates to consider how Canadians could strive to live their lives together in a genuine commitment to pluralism. Chaired by Imam Dr. Hamid Slimi and Ms. Janet Noel-Annable, delegates were asked to consider this question, “Can a common life be built based on genuine disagreement?” We also asked them to wonder, “How do we confront secularism and relativism and the drive to absolute autonomy in our society?”

Here’s what the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit delegates told us.

1

Hospitality

Addressing secularism and relativism while building a society amid genuine disagreement requires a posture of gracious humility, welcome, and hospitality.

“If we start out with a posture of hospitality, maybe, just maybe, we can come together in our differences. What does it mean for us to lead with a posture of hospitality, to sit around the table as we’ve done here, or we’ve done over lunch, over a meal, and have conversations that thrive in those moments? How do we create a posture of hospitality?”

2

Defining Disagreement

We must pay attention to the way we define and deal with disagreement. Delegates highlighted the need for curiosity, love, and respect in the expression and framing of disagreement.

“We did go on to frame a bit about how the disagreement might occur. Is it spoken in love? Is it civil? Is it respectful? Those are important questions to answer in terms of whether an end can be met.”

3

Vulnerability

It is essential to acknowledge mutual vulnerability to engage in authentic and generous conversation regarding disagreement and a commitment to the common good.

“We recognize the value in building a common life that includes genuine disagreement, that we have so much to learn from one another, and to grow; but this common life needs to be based on that idea of love and vulnerability that we share.”

4

Grace in Discomfort

Delegates challenged us to think of disagreement in a more robust manner. The discomfort that comes from disagreement can be met with grace and possibility. We must ask key questions of one another within this process of disagreement.

“There’s a grace in being able to have uncomfortable conversations. The value of discomfort is that it shakes us up; it stirs us. It helps us to learn about one another and to grow within ourselves. Some of us have complicated relationships with faith. How has that looked? How has religion looked in the past? What are some of the tensions there? How do we learn to forgive? What role does that play? Not only disagreements or complications with one another, but even in ourselves. What does that look like? How do we wrestle through some of those aspects?”

5

Pluralism as Process

Pluralism, our delegates reminded us, is a process, not a destination. Pluralism is nuanced and requires many choices to stay, listen, and continue forward together despite challenges along the way.

“We spoke of pluralism as a process, and that being a possible way to go on this path together through disagreement. It would entail choosing to be at the table with someone that we might not even like, let alone agree with. How can we promote a culture of pluralism? What does that even mean?”

6

From Autonomy to Community

As individuals and communities of faith we must encounter relativism and secularism from a place of conviction and communal discourse.

“We found across the board in conversations today as people of genuine faith that we respond to secularism and relativism with our belief and our conviction. We respond to absolute autonomy with our commitment to community. We do those things with kindness. We do those things with respect, as we are convicted.”

THE MILLENNIAL SUMMIT
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THE MILLENNIAL
SUMMIT

Valeria Vergani



**What role does religious faith play in your life?
Why is it important to you?**

I experience faith as an academic passion, a career interest, and a spiritual calling. Faith permeates much of what I do because it is the most immediate medium that teaches me to experience my own self deeply and meaningfully, and to relate well to others. Faith is, for me, a personal and collective practice of self-affirmation and self-love. By understanding someone's relationship to faith, I can understand a person's values and aspirations. Likewise, by growing my own relationship to my faith, I purify and nurture my own values and dreams. This means that faith is my compass and my road—it is both what shows me the way to meaning in my life and what brings me meaning along that way.

Photo Credit: Asad Chishti of Chairs and Tables.

“Faith is my compass and my road—it is both what shows me the way to meaning in my life and what brings me meaning along that way.”

What drew you to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit?

Much of the interfaith work I have participated in is geared toward an older audience. I was curious to meet other millennials who share my commitment to faith, and who actively integrate their religious backgrounds in the areas of community building and social justice. I hoped—and I was right!—that many of them would share my own questions about faith, and that their thoughts could help me clarify my own path and commitments.

What are you bringing back to your community as a result of this experience?

At the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit, I deeply appreciated meeting new friends who are deeply involved in their faith communities. The effort and the expertise necessary to invite and to gather leaders of faith who are deeply committed to their own tradition—and not simply those who are the most used to multi-faith settings—is a value that I'll take with me back to Vancouver. In particular, the model of friendship that was set forth in the summit's welcoming address by Andrew Bennett and Balpreet Singh Boparai was particularly inspiring in setting the tone for this exchange, and for putting everyone in the room at ease. Their gracefulness and faithfulness—to their own tradition as well as to one another—is something that I'll remember dearly and that I'll do my best to emulate in my own multi-faith endeavours.

“The gift and living evidence of our faiths unfold not only in the privacy of our homes but in everything that we do.”

How has your view changed regarding the role of faith in common and public life?

I left the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit with a great sense of responsibility: toward my own faith and toward all expressions of religious faith in Canada. May we as people of faith provide compelling, hopeful, and revitalizing answers to the most pressing social, ecological, and economic questions of our time. Faith's deepest power lies in moving hearts and in calling forth the best in each of us. This is the gift of faith, which goes beyond dogma, and which is tangible and relevant to every aspect of our public life. It is up to people of faith to demonstrate that this is the “why” behind our beliefs. The gift and living evidence of our faiths unfold not only in the privacy of our homes but in everything that we do.

How would you say the Canadian approach to faith in public life could improve over the next 50 years, in time for Canada's 200th anniversary?

I think any improvement of the Canadian approach rests on the possibility to demythologize the public practice of faith. As long as secular public discourse denigrates faith as a threat to free thought, rather than treating it as an expression of it, professing and practicing one's faith in public will continue to be a challenge. For this trend to be reversed, it is necessary that Canadians come to see faith as something other than a monolith and rather that they engage faith in all its complexity, its diversity, and its contradictions. This would enable the public debates on the common good to encompass religion, as well as to challenge it, not on the basis of the harm it may cause to individual freedom, but on the basis of the many relevant answers it is able to give about issues of public concern.



Milo *Let's Talk* loughlissen

**What role does religious faith play in your life?
Why is it important to you?**

I don't think that there is a decision, time, or place in which my faith exists in a box. I sometimes am surprised by the ways in which we can find opportunity to naturally integrate faith in the spaces we find ourselves. There are so many opportunities to be a faithful person, I think it might just require some special attention, or consciousness, to how we interact with our environment and others.

What drew you to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit?

To be honest, this was the first time that I had heard of anyone so intentionally bringing such a large group of young leaders together of this nature. The Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit presented an opportunity to have discussions that I would only otherwise have in a spontaneous, offhand way, or on an individual basis. Not only was I able to participate in these discussions in an intentional, collective, and meaningful way, but this summit also provided the opportunity for me to create relationships in which the conversational conclusions we came to could be built on.

What are you bringing back to your community as a result of this experience?

I emerged from the summit with the realization that the community I am a part of is not doing nearly enough to understand or be part of other communities of faith. We get caught up in the faith journey in such a

way that we falsely assume requires only the communion of those within our immediate denomination of faith affiliation to progress. It quickly became apparent to me that engagement with other faith traditions could result in a vibrant re-ignition of my personal commitment to faith. A friend and I are going to challenge ourselves to be a lot more intentional to learn from our neighbours of other faiths. At one point we discussed the notion of feeling like we had so much in common with the Buddhist (there's a joke in there somewhere), an eye-opening experience in regard to the interaction of our faiths with communities.

How has your view changed regarding the role of faith in common and public life?

My view about the role of faith in common and public life has actually changed radically, and if I'm honest, I didn't expect it to. I've always internalized my faith and because of my own diverse background have not felt prompted to reach out as

extensively for other perspectives. Prior to attending this summit, I was much more of an advocate for the private practice of faith. Now I'm starting to understand that the practicing of faith in public is not synonymous with pushing faith on those around you. It was refreshing and eye opening to be in an environment where everyone was unabashedly themselves and had been given permission to graciously be so.

How would you say the Canadian approach to faith in public life could improve over the next 50 years, in time for Canada's 200th anniversary?

I'd be hard-pressed to think of a way in which we couldn't improve, but I think that the main goal we need to be setting is the enlargement of the conversation of faith. It is my hope that these conversations are so well integrated in public and common life by Canada's 200th anniversary that the need to convene a special summit to highlight the role of faith will be unnecessary.

Our Religious Life and the Common Good

Our fourth session during the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit asked delegates to consider how religious life contributed to and interacted with the concept of the common good. Led by Cabinet of Canadian members Rabbi Daniel Friedman and Dr. Colin Saldanha, delegates were asked to consider the following questions: “Are religious institutions open to millennials’ understanding of public faith?” and, “Are there challenges to understanding the common good, such as cultural and theological differences?”

Here’s what the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit delegates told us.

1

A New Orthodoxy

This generation has witnessed a rise in the return to more orthodox conceptions of faith.

“Our generation depends on authenticity, and we want that, so we are seeing a bit of this return to orthodoxy.”

2

Ethno-religious Tensions

Millennials face a challenge in their striving to be part of communities of faith that share their roots with a particular ethnic or cultural heritage. This requires a delicate posture in regard to the process of parsing through which aspects of their faith community are transcendent and which are particular to their ethnic or cultural heritage.

“One big challenge in immigrant communities is the intersection of religion and culture. When second-generation immigrants or younger people reject cultural practices, they are sometimes viewed as also rejecting religious practices. This is not the same process, but this is nevertheless how young people are sometimes made to feel.”

3

Tokenism

Millennials told us that while they found there to be at least an initial openness to their involvement in faith institutions, many cited a lack of clarity about whether their place at the table was merely driven by tokenism.

“Overall, we agreed that there is an openness, at least superficially, toward millennials’ being involved and their understanding of public faith. At least a couple of voices around the table were concerned about tokenism. Having a token millennial on the board of your church or your local mosque is great, but are our voices actually being listened to in those spaces?”

4

Collective Common Good

Despite the nuance and complexity that surrounds the phrase “the common good,” millennials of faith gradually asserted that they shared a common belief in “the virtuous life,” which they saw as being similar in meaning.

“We heard a lot about the common good as being the virtuous life. Faith as a genuine confidence leads to a general recognition of yourself and also other faith communities as being able to work toward a greater unity.”

5

It Starts with Me

We cannot pursue the common good as a community without that pursuit first being centralized within the life of the individual.

“Is the bigger problem not so much in our definition of the common good but in our capacity to actually carry it out? Is there a level of hypocrisy in bringing up versions of the common good that we’re not actively pursuing in our own lives? We can talk forever about a common good, but are we actually integrating this pursuit into our own lives?”

6

Step Up, Step Out

Pursuit of the common good is a dynamic experience. We must undertake it in boldness and follow up with action.

“Perhaps we can’t talk about a version of the common good that is essentially passive in nature. So is it a common good if it doesn’t involve not simply tolerating and sitting back but actively stepping forward in love to the other?”





Sara Masood

**What role does religious faith play in your life?
Why is it important to you?**

My religious faith (Islam) is inherently embedded in my everyday life. It provides me with a strong foundation, core morals, and values that shape how I comprehend and respond to all situations. I am who I am today because of my faith. Faith has been a learning experience that has allowed me to self-reflect and to discover my self-identity. I am always ready to live and express my Muslim faith unapologetically.

“Investing in ‘religious literacy’ is hugely important if we want to develop a two-way communication between our faith community and other faith communities.”

What drew you to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit?

Attending the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit as one of the 75 young Canadian delegates gathered on Canada’s 150th was undoubtedly one of the best and most rewarding experiences of my life. I was drawn to the summit’s focus on discussing the role of faith in Canada. I was drawn by the summit’s vision to bring together young leaders from different faith communities who are actively engaged from across Canada. Giving millennials an opportunity to openly share their points of view as well as their ideas about how we can be passionate about our faith identity alongside our Canadian identity is commendable.

What are you bringing back to your community as a result of this experience?

One of the key lessons that I have brought back with me to share with my community as a result of this experience is that investing in “religious literacy” is hugely important if we want to develop a two-way communication between our faith community and other faith communities.

On my last day in Ottawa, on Canada Day, a Mormon delegate asked if he could observe me and two other Muslim delegates in prayer (salah) and join us in the remembrance of God (dua/dhikr) to experience what we experience. What I have learned from these thought-provoking interactions is that there is a sense of curiosity in others to learn about Muslim faith, and that my community and I need to seize opportunities to connect with others when they reveal themselves.



“We need to move beyond inclusion to creating a sense of belonging.”

How has your view changed regarding the role of faith in common and public life?

I have now come to realize that almost all faith communities (not just mine) strongly believe that faith plays an essential role in common and public life (whether it is expressed outwardly or not), and hence is inseparable from them. Faith communities need to come together not only to challenge the current narrative that somewhat undermines the role of faith in public life but also to find a common narrative that acknowledges the value faith adds to public life. I have now come to realize that we should not only look for commonalities in our faith traditions to build connections but also recognize that having differences is also a common thing.

How would you say the Canadian approach to faith in public life could improve over the next 50 years, in time for Canada's 200th anniversary?

To improve the Canadian approach to faith in public life over the next 50 years, we need to start afresh by first (re)assessing how well different faith communities know and understand each other. We need to move beyond inclusion to creating a sense of belonging; this means giving different faiths a seat at the table not because we have to but because we wholeheartedly want to.

We need to develop, and more importantly, sustain partnerships and collaborative initiatives to acknowledge the role of faith in Canada. The members of different faith communities need to reach out to each other in solidarity to build friendships that are long-term and that let us talk about faith as a positive thing.

Faith and Millennials: Key Challenges

Our fifth session during the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit asked delegates to consider the key challenges that a person of faith must contend with in the public square. Led by Cabinet of Canadians members Jeff Lockert and Balpreet Singh Boparai, delegates were asked to discuss and share their experience addressing these key challenges. Topics that millennials considered included, but were not limited to, the suggestion that faithful Canadians have suspended their rational selves in moments of prayer or worship, the challenge of holding objective and universal beliefs in tandem, the prospect of potential professional and social marginalization, and the inference that those of faith are intolerant.

Here's what the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit delegates told us.

1

We Are Responsible

—
People of faith have a responsibility to proactively engage and challenge misinformed narratives within the public sphere that wrongly frame faith.

"All of us have a personal responsibility to enact the values we believe in, to champion the gifts of our faiths, and to take a proactive approach to complicating the narratives of faith and secularism in which we all live. This requires deconstructing the narratives and stereotypes, and really engaging people with where they're at. This again comes with a high degree of personal responsibility and reflexivity, and realizing how we contribute to the communities we are a part of."

2

Religious Humility and Redemption

—
While the instinct in addressing a mischaracterization of faith or an inaccurate framing of one's character or worldview can so often be frustration, millennials encouraged one another to keep mercy and the faithful principle of redemption at the forefront of their minds.

"One of the characteristics that God has across the spectrum is one of mercy. This looks like an openness to redemption. Religious humility means that you remember that there's redemption for everyone."

3

Address These Misperceptions

—
While it may be tempting to avoid confrontation or uncomfortable conversation, millennials told us that misperceptions and false dichotomies regarding faith must be addressed boldly.

"We have a responsibility to challenge those ideas, to challenge those assumptions when we encounter them in the public square. For example, the notion that we are people of faith and we therefore reject science. That is something we have to work to challenge."

4

Curiosity Is Key

Millennials told us that in the midst of debate and disagreement, curiosity would provide an avenue to bring people together. Sharing about faith, purpose, and joy within this curious space is the key to a shared future.

“How can we foster inquisitiveness? How can we actually ask questions? We talked about faith bringing purpose, and that joy that I believe each of us finds within our faith that gives us a higher calling.”

5

A False Dichotomy

The inference that science or “progress” is the antithesis of faith is a false dichotomy, and the relevance of faith must be emphasized once again in common spaces and the public square.

“I think we were unanimous in thinking that the concept of ‘religion versus more progressive ideas’ is a false dichotomy. There are many reasons to think that religion is a relevant part of today’s conversation on various issues.”

6

Invitation

The consideration and addressing of key challenges should lead us to reflect on how we exist within community and how a spirit of hospitality might enlarge public spaces and the dialogue surrounding faith itself.

“Beyond words, beyond apologetics, beyond political means, the way we live as people of faith is through hospitality, through invitation. We live so that our words and our deeds in the spaces will be noticed. Our language as a group through this dialogue changed from ‘control the narrative’ to ‘influence the narrative,’ to ‘hosting the narrative,’ and to really being open and helping people to understand that religion is more than just a piece of an identity.”





The Faith in Canada 150

MILLENNIAL SUMMIT

Being Okay with Questions and the Pluralistic Ethic



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

Moving Forward in Friendship and Faith

Delegates spent the entirety of the final session of the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit breaking bread together and engaging in relationship. They also considered how to move forward as dynamic millennials of faith to build an increasingly pluralistic, free, and faithful Canada. Their conclusions are best summarized in a letter affirmed at the summit's conclusion.

LOOKING FOR A STAND-ALONE VERSION TO PASS ALONG?

[CLICK HERE](#)

Dear Canada,

We write to you on the eve of the 150th anniversary of Confederation to affirm the role of faith in the formation of Canada in its past, today, and in future generations to come.

We, delegates of the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit, have taken hold of the opportunity that 2017 has provided to reflect on the role that faith communities and individuals of differing faith traditions have had on the formation of our nation.

We, young millennial leaders of faith, have devoted the days preceding this significant anniversary for our country to contend with questions that we feel merit consideration in the formation of the next 150 years of Canadian history:

For many centuries, faith has shaped the human landscape of Canada. It has shaped how we live our lives; how we relate to our neighbours; how we fulfill our social responsibilities; and how we share a common life together as Canadians.

What is the public square and who inhabits it?

Can faith be truly public?

Can a common life be built based on genuine disagreement?

What do religious communities contribute toward the formation of the common good?

How do we demonstrate through action the link between friendship and faith to our non-religious peers?

WE HEREBY AFFIRM:

We take this opportunity today to affirm our hope that Canada's next generation of faithful leaders will move beyond tolerance to cultivate a more vibrant expression of pluralism, founded on the resolution to live peaceably in diversity. Such genuine pluralism

admits both public and private expressions of faith even when our beliefs differ from one another. We affirm that we desire a genuine respect for the inherent dignity of the human person regardless of what faith or non-religious belief they profess. It is our hope that public expressions of faith will contribute to a renewed commitment to cultivating a vibrant, pluralist Canadian society.

Furthermore, we hope that it will encourage a renewed acceptance of the continuing role of faith within Canadian public life.

WE PLEDGE:

1. To celebrate the role of faith in the formation of our rich and diverse culture.
2. To remind Canadians of the contributions religious faith has made to our common life.
3. To tell stories about the role of faith from our past that resonate through our present and toward our future.
4. To encourage and inspire communities of faith to greater participation in and celebration of Canadian life.
5. To help build a network of leaders across private and public, religious and secular institutions who recognize and seek to nurture the place of faith in our life together.

WE WILL AFFIRM AND CHAMPION the role of faith in our common life as Canadians in the spirit of friendship, ensuring that individuals and communities of faith retain an active role in the formation of the spirit and life of this nation.

This open letter was affirmed at the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit at the Ottawa Offices of Cardus, Canada's faith-based think tank, June 30, 2017.

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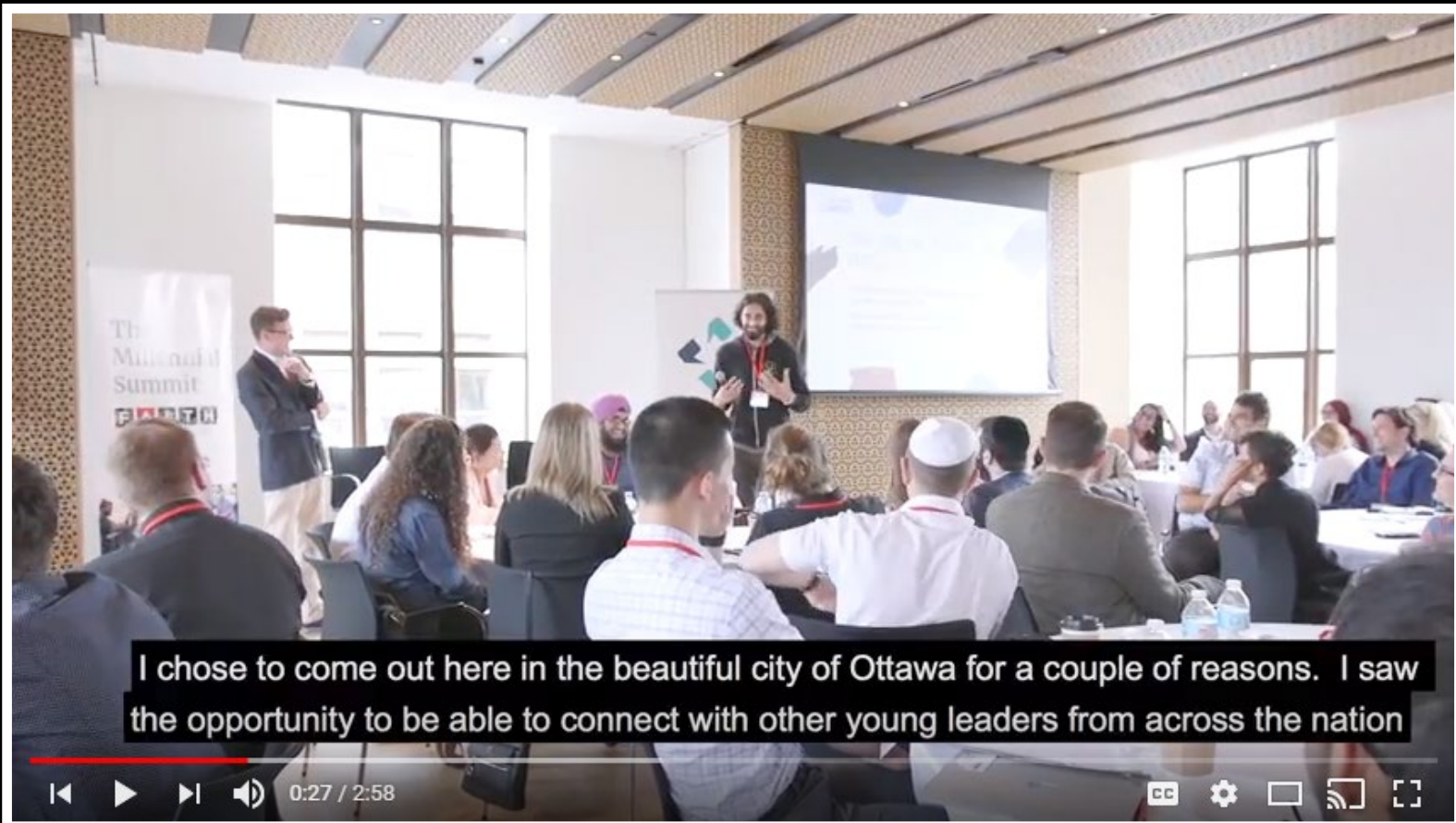
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THE MILLENNIAL
SUMMIT
MOVING FORWARD IN
FRIENDSHIP AND FAITH



The Faith in Canada 150
**MILLENNIAL
SUMMIT**

Beautiful Similarity



I chose to come out here in the beautiful city of Ottawa for a couple of reasons. I saw the opportunity to be able to connect with other young leaders from across the nation

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

Steeven Toor



**What role does religious faith play in your life?
Why is it important to you?**

Religious faith plays a key role in my life as it guides me through my day-to-day activities. As a firm believer in the Sikh religion, I would say that faith is important to me because of the strong Sikh values I attempt to uphold. For example, honesty and integrity are some key values that Sikhs believe in, and thus earning an honest living is very important. Every action that I take as an individual is guided by the teachings of my faith.



What drew you to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit?

I was drawn to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit due to the fact that there would be other young leaders around my age who are actively involved in their communities back home and in their faith. I think the most beneficial part of the conference was the ability to network and create these friendships with other young leaders from across Canada.

What are you bringing back to your community as a result of this experience?

I'm emerging a lot more mindful of the need for increased openness and interaction among different faiths. I was aware of the need to break barriers between different communities beforehand, but I think this summit helped me focus some of my thoughts on how this can be accomplished. I realized that we need to start offering a welcoming hand to those around us and encourage them to ask questions if they are not sure about something. Many times people are afraid they will be insensitive or rude if they ask their questions, and I think offering that first gesture of "Hey, it's okay to be curious and to ask questions," is essential.

How has your view changed regarding the role of faith in common and public life?

I don't think my views on my personal journey with my faith were changed in regard to religious life in the common and public sphere, as I wear a turban and beard everywhere I go and have been used to having my religion present in all aspects of my life. What I did gain, however, was the realization that some religions that were being actively practiced in common life were not as present in the public sphere. This is a relatively new concept to me, because I personally strive to have continuity between my identity and religion regardless of whether I am in a private or public sphere.

How would you say the Canadian approach to faith in public life could improve over the next 50 years, in time for Canada's 200th anniversary?

I think different communities from across Canada need to embrace one another as fellow Canadians. There needs to be a widespread belief in oneness and unity, despite what religion and faith we might follow. There needs to be an understanding that it's okay to believe in different ideologies and have differing views than our fellow Canadians. It is essential, however, to cultivate a mutual respect for one another. I think the more we promote this diversity of thought and religious and faith pluralism concept among our youth, the brighter our future Canada will be.

The Role of Faith in the Formation of a Hopeful Tomorrow



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#)

Would you like to continue the conversation in your own community?

We received over one hundred applications for the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit. Each prospective delegate was required to submit a question that they thought was essential for consideration in the conversation regarding the role of faith in common and public Canadian life.

We have included a curated list of some of their questions. The best dialogues give rise to continued conversation. It is our hope that by providing you with these questions, you too will be able to begin, continue, and enlarge the conversation regarding the role of faith in Canadian life.

- How do we explore and express faith in a meaningful way? How do we do so as young people? How does the political pull toward secularism affect the role of faith in common life in Canada? What does effective faith-based public engagement look like in a postmodern, secular culture? How can I bring contemporary issues to the foreground in my community and attract passionate young people of faith to our community without alienating the older, more conservative members of it?
- What tools and skills do young people of faith need to develop and teach one another in order to foster respect, humility, and self-confidence?
- How can we work better together as faithful Canadians to create safer communities that celebrate diversity and respect personal convictions?
- How can one live a life of conviction to their beliefs while still respecting the journey of people from other faiths?
- How has your faith changed the way you interact daily with your community, neighbours, and strangers?


Walter Brynjolfson

*Let's
Talk*

**What role does religious faith play in your life?
Why is it important to you?**

I would say that it plays a very central role in my life. In fact my entire identity is founded on my understanding of who Jesus was and what he would have me do for my life. It is everything; I derive my meaning and purpose in life from my faith. My faith also brings me much of my joy and satisfaction.





What attracted you to the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit?

Having lived in Israel and Palestine for two years, I saw the result of religious difference gone wrong. I saw the result of mass separation and society-wide refusal to acknowledge each other's narratives. I was deeply concerned to see what humans can do as a result of refusing to sit at the same table, to listen, and respect each other. As a Canadian, I'm pretty proud of my country in that respect. I'm proud of our heritage of pluralism and our capacity to have a multi-faith society in a way that is healthy. So I wanted to be a part of building that kind of society a bit more, to promote that. The way I see it, humanity's global capacity for interfaith relations seem to be going downhill with our differences being highlighted and polarized. I feel that Canada can be at the forefront of countering that trend. I wanted to be a part of that and saw the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Summit as an opportunity to get involved.

What are you bringing back to your community as a result of this experience? Do you have either a concrete example or a story?

On one of the days of the summit I found myself around a table with two Muslims, a Jewish delegate, a Baha'i woman, and two other Christians. We were seeking to answer the question, "How can people of varied faiths work together?" At the discussion's end, we concluded that all faiths would work together if there was a common problem that needed to be addressed.

Later that day, as we exited from the Global Centre for Pluralism, where we had been meeting, we heard a huge crash and turned to see what the noise had been. A cyclist had been hit by a car. He lay on the street with blood coming out of his ear. Within seconds we were enacting the answer to our own question. A Christian nurse was accessing him, a rabbi kept watch, an imam and a Sikh gathered around to assist. This remains a very beautiful picture in my mind from the summit that I often share with people. We can work together toward a common cause.

“We should be proud of being able to integrate our faith in public life.”

How has your view changed regarding the role of faith in common and public life?

I guess I'm finding out that there are so many more opportunities out there than I ever imagined to do work with other faith groups. Many people from different faith backgrounds share this same mindset and willingness to dialogue and work together. It is a matter of bridging ourselves together. There is a need for more groups and institutions that are working to bridge religious groups. I have realized that I can be part of this and am looking forward to engaging to a greater degree.

How would you say the Canadian approach to faith in public life could improve over the next 50 years, in time for Canada's 200th anniversary?

I think that we can change our identity as Canadians from being proudly secular to being proudly spiritual—inclusive and multi-faith. I think the trend is that we are becoming proud of our secularism, but as we discovered in the conference, secularism can't be forced into our public lives if we are people of faith. We should be proud of being able to integrate our faith in public life. I can foresee a future marked by people of faith, proud of displaying that reality in the public sphere. To me, that would probably look like at some point in the next 50 years, a prime minister who is from a different religious background—not just nominally faithful and working in a very visible way to facilitate public celebrations of pluralism and multi-faith society.

Moving Forward

November 27, 2017 | Ottawa

Dialogue

For many centuries, faith has shaped the human landscape of Canada. It has shaped how we live our lives, how we see our neighbours, how we fulfill our social responsibilities, and how we imagine our life together. As delegates talked with one another, learned from members of our Cabinet of Canadians, and sought wisdom from local faith leaders, it was our hope that Canada's next generation of faithful leaders would move beyond tolerance to a more vibrant expression of living peaceably in diversity.

The Faith in Canada 150 Millennial delegates spoke of the need for humility and a shared sense of vulnerability as being integral to the process of multi-faith dialogue. Respect, dialogue, grace, and authenticity were put forward as the cornerstones for an increasingly pluralistic Canada. Delegates issued a call to remember the centrality of human dignity.

"We called for a shared public value of human dignity, of conscience, and against violence."

Dialogue and reflection are the keys to the future. Delegates told us unequivocally,

"We need to, within our own traditions, engage in dialogue and be able to articulate what we actually believe in and grow together within a faith community."

There is room in the Canada of the future, it turns out, for genuine and generous disagreement.

"We believe a common life can include genuine disagreement. We also decided there's a beautiful opportunity here that a monoculture is neither strong nor beautiful, so disagreement can actually be something that makes us better. It makes us more beautiful as societies and as people."

As delegates wrestled with difficult questions and shared from the richness of their lived experience, they described the experience as being both beautiful and relationally formational. Reflected one delegate, "How do you sum up the conversations and the experiences that we're having? For me, this has just been a really humbling experience, but also a beautiful one, so I feel very lucky to be a part of this."

As we continue to envision the next 150 years of Canadian history together, may we reflect on the hopeful vision cast by 75 dynamic leaders from across the nation. May we strive to take their words to heart and cultivate a pluralism marked by gracious process, devotion marked by openness, and dialogue marked by a diverse sense of difference.

In Peace,
Hannah Marazzi, Project Lead





**Would you like to
continue speaking
with us?**

Contact us today for more resources, to engage with the Faith in Canada 150 Millennial Network that has emerged, or to become part of our Faith Alliance!



WITH THANKS

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The Faith in Canada 150
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