

20 YEARS OF SYA

Satwant Calais

[00:01 Inaudible] Come on I think you had the training, they're going to respond.

Okay good evening ladies and gentlemen, before we begin proceedings, I would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people. We pay respect to the culture that's over two, sixty thousand years old, and the land on which the UTS is a land that belonged to them. I also like to acknowledge Mr. Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi our MP from New Zealand. Welcome, so nice to see have you here with us and Mr Inderjit Singh former MP from Singapore Welcome. Distinguished panellists that were here for the Elevate 2019 conference thank you for your amazing insight and sharing your information today- it was just awesome. I think every one of us no matter what age you are at me mid-sixties that we all lose something. We all learn something, every knot is and, anyway I'm sure you touched many hearts here today and minds more importantly. I also like to thank of course the Sunga team, the Sikh professional from all over New Zealand and Australia and Singapore for that matter, they're present here and our members of our Sikh Illustrated family. Thank you for being here today, but today is Manisha just said I think we created history.

Today every one of you is part of the Australian Sikh history, but every or such an incredible conference to bring this collection professionals that have been there that wanted to share their knowledge and experience with you the up and coming future generation and young Sikhs in Australia, this has never been held in any way else like this. So I think we really had an awesome day and thank you for all your support and, more importantly, I just like to thank the commitment and the passion of the YSPN team led by Ramneek concurrent and, of all the other teams that have been meeting every Sunday you know in the Macquarie University Library or in a small park but they all turn up with the laptops and they keep on working. So, thank you very much. let's give them a big big hand.

[Applause]

Just a few hours ago, I got a message from the Honourable Harinder Sidhu the Australian High Commissioner, and she says this "my best wishes to all attending the YSPN conference. There's such an impressive group of people. Australia is in good hands if this is an example of our future leadership. My warmest and best wishes to all of you and congratulations."

So, let's give a big hand to her.

[Applause]

She's presented at one of your events. So, the strong support of its way she's come to a couple of our camps and she's, her heart is here with you and, so with Uncle Diar and I was going to be one of us because today but, he's had Cody here to do a few performances and he sent a long message it's all on me but, I'm just beginning around me and said he'll put you on the website. So, it's good to have our elders that are overseas, they still think of you because they all think of you as their own children right and they're part of the family.

So, let's talk about the SYA history and why are we here. Since, as we all know I've had a long history in Australia you've got the history of Australians from farmers and traveling across the Australia to do a

search of a better future. I myself came to Australia as a school student in January 14, 1970. Do you know how long that is? Who's good in mathematics? 48, 49 years almost 50 and said. Put together. So, I came here in a student all alone to go to the school in a boarding house. The Australia I saw then was very different than what we see today. Back then the White Australia Policy was still at large. In Hobo where I was base was hardly any Sikhs for the not more than a handful and, I mean the three in a handful. There was only one Italian restaurant and only one Chinese restaurant in Hobo. And here coming from Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur where the hustle-bustle, multiracial, that life and then there is no life after five o'clock right. But in the 1970s Australia's rise from small community of farmers there were very few established Asians working as professionals too. To put it politely their attitudes over stages were not as open as we see today. We were expected to receive and accept all the taunts that we get every month very politely and then but we are presented the choice either keep your head low, sit down work hard and accelerate or stand out, pop it on your chin and take on the chubby does hurt.

So, here's a boy coming here. Coming to Australia with starched turban going to a boarding house. So, can you just feel this? The challenges I had to try to get my turbans starched and folded by the glory of the lord in Hoonah

So, there were good times. Challenging times have never been never feared, never fear. Believe in yourself.

What about completing my studies University of Tasmania I'm putting over some politics I mean good is great I was the first Asian member of the you know the board of the University Council. The council that you ran University in Tasmania, and it was a privilege to serve them then. But now, fast-forward 28 years of 1998. When we came from Tasmania my family, my dear wife and two boys migrated to Sydney in 1995. A group of 25 children walked into the Australian. This marked the first youth camp in Australia in 1998. So, one Australia had come a long way from the White Australia Policy being dismantled for 1970's. The challenges facing our young skids were no less confronting. Yes, politically came along with towards equality. Yes, as a community we worked hard to build our good doers in each type of City. Yes, these trainings Sikhs games was establish and along with a number of community small sporting organization and our community was growing slowly. But the most important was that one important thing was missing. That was our youth. Connecting with our youth.

We found that in Canadian time and because of that our youth were lost. In 1981. We found that families were being engaged while they were not around us as this is common amongst recent migrants' families that were more focused on establishing themselves in new country simply equal higher ties, cultural, faith and tradition. We weren't talking to our youth. They were struggling to navigate in a Western society opening what we do on faith and culture and traditions, and I'm sure many of you went through that. So, the youth were faced with a very simple question. Who am I? So, the theory of Australia was for me this context. to help our youth recognizing they weren't just a small visible minority burdened by being different. We needed to share our rich legacy. The static a spill to speed of our ooze with them. To unlimited faith and knowledge and skills that they need not only to survive in this new land but to thrive.

Tell us the genesis of Australia. So together with a few committers, several thousand families in a few others here, Thank you. So, twenty years ago these families work together and, I say families because everybody was involved in the family. Our spouses, our children. This has a collective strength of the

communities and family and so the firm we have this to our own children to see what issues they have so we can help them resolve some of those issues.

So base on the successful experience in other countries strictly in Malaysia and Singapore we decided to proceed this issue to sponsor the youth camps for five days on the camp. We were no longer the minority. We could be happy ourselves and we could have a conversation among themselves. The youths could have conversations among themselves. Parents could have conversations with youths. No matter whether they are your own sons and daughters. Regardless, cause once you come to camp everybody is your son and your daughter and everybody is father and mother. So that's what we miss today. From that one conversation we grew and using our annual summer camp as a pillar which is now attended by the over 350 people every year and I know so many familiar faces here at the end of the camp.

So, our camp was focused on city programs and helped our youth to be proudly placed Sikhs and connect with their own like-minded youth and families. We after a few years with that invested as our kids grew old invest in internationally accredited leadership and development programs. We saw our youth facing new challenges once they move from school to university and to the workplace. Everybody has a university degree these days. Everybody. Everyone obviously. That's a given, but not something liking that you know that is made challenging for our kids to get to the next stage up in their career or let say to outreach in the University.

They like what they like for soft skills know how confidence and inspiration to succeed and break every single barrier they have their minds. We then provided a platform for social and entrepreneurship and we found that not many young adults wanted to contribute and to many of our communities' challenges at that time. Under which we saw today the development of YSPN.

Another terrible charitable initiative such as counting care which is a community health service where we bring together our medical tremendous talent or medical professions to come into the same a new Gowanus free of charged. Five of those camps every year across Australia. We have sought to give where our teams who are collect all peel of clothes for more female members of community and then sell them in markets, raise funds and then provide charity to women's shelters in Australia. We have eco Sikhs that work with our peel in doing landscaping and heritage scale.

So, we created this environment where we encouraged and nurtured traded crowdfunding the first crowdfunding was for YSPN where we generate about two and a half thousand dollars. So, the next stage we go to is where we focused on our history. Our history is palette with beautiful culture, arts and creativity. So, we wanted to celebrate the rich heritage of our history to our exhibitions. Cement inquisitive come from Mecca from UK and he helped every single city in Sydney as well as fairly as well as New Zealand where we had camps, we have exhibitions and we now know that there's so many young talents just blossomed since then because, they felt that they could do art too. Everyone talked about they would just be engineers and doctors. So, it's good to see that. If we had kept them to us. You know for two months in January and February we have almost about sixty towards either programs.

We had the Sikhs back buying back by my mentors. We performed in NZ days Marge's both here Emperor Melvin. So that's just some of the connectivity. That's the sort of environment you want to generate so that our youth can make you feel proud in what their history is. If you go into some more history research and that's why the work that it's doing nowadays it's incredible and more of us are

helping to reach even further goals. So, what we get from here you can see that this is the Casa spirit, the Sikhs spirit, the leadership, the charity, the culture the SEMA that's the SYE ecosystem. And what we see now is that how our youths become adults and parents and they're coming back to the camp with their kid. So, we've been blessed now with having three generations of campers. So, we are very blessed then and thank you so much for the ongoing support.

So, in 20 years what we've created is a miracle. To help a community investing in its future. That is a generationally impact for twenty years. That is twenty years of Australia

[Applause]

So now we operate in five states and territories. We host over 50 events nationally each year and we are supported by a dedicated team of 70 volunteers and so many other Sailor that are here today and we knowledge their contributions. So, thank you so much for being with us for twenty years.

Now I want to discuss with you the values of this journey. So often in our community an institution be here about institutional politics in fighting the scandals, court cases and many feels that this is dividing our small and vulnerable community. To the very beginning, that's why we set a moral compass deliberately to engage with our youth in the most effective inspiring way. This meant that we had embraced some very clear values and I'm so glad to hear the same values repeated today during the conversation that we had all day.

- First one was the acceptance of Sri Guru Granth same as our living Guru. That's guide that's our inspiration. Equality-We're not judgmental and inclusive serving accepting all Sikhs regardless of what they look like or where they come from.
- Social capital-We like to empower our youth so that they can give and, you've seen it. You've seen it today with your own eyes. You felt it with your own eyes. The commitment, the empower and the contributions backed by our youth today.
- Independence-With delivery set up with independent of all to good doers we want to be fully transparent. We wanted to work in collaboration with all the good parts and all the other community organizations. Focus for positive outcomes for our community. Not ego not politics.
- And finally, Faith- above all we practice a city that was not based on fear. It was based on love. L-O-V-E love. That again he says its total love because God is help is your friend our beauties your friend he's ever forgiving. So, it's better it's a safe having a compass that points north. And we've seen our youth then come to our camps that anything goes on your own pathway. Because we all have our pathways. Ultimately, they come back to the North Point.

I was supposed to show you some slides, but I forgot. So that's my story. We can u talk about the 23 happily married couples.

[Applause]

They met in various functions then actually married and having children and then coming back again. so, it's so nice to see all that here.

Okay so where are we today oh and by the way just on the three-year anniversary yeah Baljeet Singh who based in Melbourne he's actually written a book on the history of SYA and collecting all our photographs from the first camp to where we are today and we're publishing that later this year. So, watch his face.

So where are we today? Australia today is quite different to that of 1970s and once again twenty-one years ago when those 25 children walk in the boudoir and for the first three camp. Today we have a community of various 125,000 the children walk in the boudoir and also for the thirsty came today we, today we have a community of various 125,000 the nation of 25 million which represents 0.5 percent or 1 percent of the population.

So we've come a long way in twenty years, the proof is in room. The proof is in this room. Look at the caliber or see professions from Australia in the region gathered today in this room. As a community we have grown and Michael's race we have blessed to have so many successful Sikhs from so many fields in doing business, government culture, medical and social services. We have just finished five years strategic plan last year. And as an organization we are now in process is preparing another five-year plan. In that process for a little consultation with the community and they have identified some critical issues and challenges that face us the next few years. I'll just share some of those challenges with you one of them is with individualism and atheist thinking on the rise following a faith and belonging to a community is quickly becoming unpopular. How does the Sikhs create and interact to this new world? It's real. So, what should the next generation community institutions look like to serve our community as it evolves? Have you given any thought to that?

So how do you engage the mainstream of Australian and participate in the political and economic debate that has been discussed today? of the young potential from foreign nations?

The next one is how do we brand our community and gain community recognition for our positive contribution to Australia in terms of its economic and social development ? How do you brand our community? What do you think that we want our community to be open when you talk about a Sikhs? the first key words that comes to a mind of agora or non-Sikhs or even a Sikhs the young Sikhs that's born in is Australia but he thinks about what Sikhism is? What are the brandings are we going to use to indulge them in a positive mindset?

How do we support those in our community that have got mental problems, domestic issues and drug issues? Do we have these things? these things sorry to say it doesn't happen in our community yet. And how do we care for our older generations who have given all of us their love and care for how many years? They are getting old. We're getting busy in our lives. We've got no time to talk to them as we did before and as they used to do for us. How are we going to keep you for them? Who don't take the initiative step to bring it together? And the population of our elders increasing is you all know. What function can be put in place to manage all these issues? There are big task in front of us don't you agree?

What a task but I think I'm very confident to be in the community but the strength of our faith and the support of the next generation centres that are sitting right in front is in this room and, the enterprising work ethic that's in our blood. We will meet this term later.

So in concluding to the hard work for our parents all of you have had a good education, right? All of you have good jobs or will get good jobs to have a home and a family in god's grace. But then what's next?

what's next? We are at a difficult point as we become a more established community. We need to decide what direction we will need to development. To do that we need to ask ourselves some very difficult questions. And each and one of you this room must ask the same question. Can I contribute to the conversation with our youth of today? So, you though today and quite different 21 years ago. And our community today is aging having different sort of issues.

What role can I play in the next 20 years for community development? We can't solve problems overnight. I mean that he talked about his 12, 16-year career in politics and to see me. If others look in that sort of time span in 20 years what is the role that we want to play?

What is the legacy that we want to leave for our community as individuals, our nation and ending the world as sustainable Sikhs? What is the legacy?

So, come on board. Roll up your sleeves. Joining SYN, joining, YSPN joining the marvellous initiative and you heard some of them see the stores out there some amazing initiatives. Let's do something. Positive, creative, innovative forward-thinking so that all our generations our parents, our grandparents and young children and grandchildren can now live in a world that's harmonious and productive and inconsistent with the teachings on simple lifestyle. That's a critical point. All right thank you thank you again.

[Applause]

Thank you YSPN for an awesome evening today and my greetings and blessing to all of you.

And just to finish off Friends of Sikh Youth Australia they are having a charity golf day on the 30th of March. It's been held in the wonderful golf course north of Sydney in Richmond the 30th so we have Ricky Singh over there Jaspreet and Jaswinder. They are all here so please see them and get some information. Thank you.

[Applause]