

CHAIR OPENING

Ramneek Singh

Thank you Gursimrat for the introduction and good morning ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to YSPN's Elevate 2019 conference. Elevate is the first ever Sikh Professionals Conference to be held in the southern hemisphere and to our knowledge the largest gathering of Sikh professionals ever globally. You should all be proud of participating in an event that will become a milestone achievement for Sikhs in Australia if not globally. To think that this organization was founded by five people during an afternoon in glee and has since grown to six chapters across Australia, New Zealand, reaching over 270,000 people on social media, engaging over 20,000 of them and hosting over 700 people at our events and mentoring 55 people during our last year alone.

For those of you for whom this is your first exposure to YSPN, it is a labour of love, a labour of love by an executive team that derives no monetary compensation for their service but contributes physically and financially to a mission that they believe in, it is a labour of love that they do not receive accolades for the work that they do but instead work to build an environment where others can share and receive their own and is a labour of love that they do not do this out of a personal interest but instead for the benefit and the development of the community. In short, this labour of love is done in service of the community with no expectation or regard for compensation or recognition in return, that is the definition of sewa, and sewa is a large part of the theme for today, it's a theme that holds deep significance within our organisation pervading everything that we do, it's funny that such deeply held ideas are often identified by others and the recognition that this was the case, first emerged through a project that we did to find ways to better serve our audience then crystallized in the development of the YSPN brand.

A consistent thread was the idea that the work we do is not really about networking or about the fancy words that we use in our mission statement of creating the conditions for young Sikhs to succeed and amplify their influence. At its core YSPN is an organization committed to doing and helping others to receive and do on their own sya, it's from this foundation that our organization was built and that Elevate 2019 is before you today. At YSPN we choose to focus our effort on professional sya, I recognize that this isn't the traditional idea of putting on longer, helping in the kitchen, handing out plates and cutlery to the son girth and then doing the washing up afterwards. You only need to look at Facebook to see that such a concept of sewa can be challenging to the traditional orthodoxy, that idea of sewa and longer is still deeply important but why should our concept of sya be restricted such a narrow Interpretation. Why isn't sewa a larger ideal agnostic of context and if it should be then how does one interpret and apply it in other parts of their life, after all our world has changed drastically since the 15th century when these ideas were first articulated by Guru Nanak, and our world has only continued to accelerate in its pace of change. In the last 10 years we've seen the global tussle between the ideals of progressive liberalism and conservative nationalism in places like Europe, Britain, India and the United States. Indeed one need only look at the stark contrast between electing America's first black president with the embrace of progress, progressive liberal ideology almost as the culmination of progress since made since enlightenment and then the subsequent rise of conservative nationalism, nationalist ideology reflected in the populist in the election of populist demagogue Donald Trump, but America is not alone in this regard. Britain and Europe have wrangled over brexit and the rise of far-

right parties winning elections in Greece, Italy and even Germany have destabilized European politics and it's not only in politics that we're seeing these changes. The behaviour of our leaders has implications for how people go about their daily lives, after all our leaders often set the tone for what is and isn't acceptable in both speech and behaviour, it's to them that we look for guidance and the message that we're getting from our leaders are often polarized and adversarial, it's therefore no wonder that society itself is reflecting these themes if that is that we're to trust the fake news that's out there.

Technology is another important driver of the changes we're seeing across society, during my lifetime I've seen the development of affordable consumer level personal computers, the evolution of technologies like GPS, mobile phones and social media, which come with them, the promise of shortening physical distances between people and providing the space for deeper connections. Now while this idyllic utopian promise of social media was the vision that was articulated the emerging reality is one that's considerably darker, with questions about the mental health and long-term impacts of these technologies. Research is unfolding and uncovering the pernicious health effects of these purportedly beneficial technologies and now we're seeing the emergence of a new wave of technologies set to disrupt our economies, businesses and jobs, for example artificial intelligence, augmented reality and big data already changing the way we work and some are suggesting that they're even threatening the livelihoods of white-collar workers and broad swaths of society. So these are all trends and changes that we have to grapple with ourselves and it's within that context that we pose the question, what does sewa mean in a rapidly changing world?

Our panellists and speakers over the course of today will set about answering that question using their backgrounds, experience and positions as practitioners and experts. We've structured Elevate as our first ever conference to parallel the story and development of the Sikh community in Australia, we start with a discussion of the pattern and story of the waves of Sikh migration starting in the late 1800s with a movement to regional farming centres on the northern New South Wales coast, and then the more recent wave of professional migration in the 1990s, in this the panellist will reflect on the development of communities and social capital and talk about the research, media coverage and personal experiences around this, from here the conversation will turn to entrepreneurship or the translation, oh sorry, from here the focus of the day will shift to the next step in migrant community development which is securing financial foundations through the formation of economic capital and typically in our community that's through the pursuit of safe corporate careers in things like financial and professional services, law, medicine and engineering, I like to call them the big five. In this panel, a group of senior Sikh executives and partners in top-tier prestigious organizations will examine the state of Sikhs in corporate Australia and reflect on how we can establish the foundations for more Sikhs to ascend to senior positions further deepening the community's economic roots, from here the conversation will turn to entrepreneurship or the translation of the formally developed economic capital into calculated risk taking. The Entrepreneurship panel will talk about the next step the communities take to extend on the economic capital that they've made, here the conversation will look at whether the level of entrepreneurship in our community is at the right level or how we can foster a deeper interest in the pursuit of entrepreneurship by a diverse group of experienced practitioners spanning both sides of the investor entrepreneur table, and finally our conversation will turn to the step of any aspiring community, the development of influence and political capital. The ultimate transformation on the journey since migration and the development of social and economic capital, it's here that YSPN's inspiration from communities in Canada, the United Kingdom, Singapore and New Zealand. Canada

with 18 member 18 Sikh members of parliament and 4 turban Sikhs as cabinet ministers is the benchmark in terms of Sikh civic representation and the beacon to which all communities in the Sikh diaspora aspire. Likewise England with a proud history of Sikh migration itself, with 2 turban Sikhs in the House of Lords and a turban Sikh MP in the House of Commons. Closer to home in Singapore and New Zealand we have Mr Inderjit Singh and Mr. Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi, both members of parliament from whom we have the pleasure of hearing from in relation to this topic later this afternoon. It's clear that Australia has a long way to go to match up hears in Singapore, Canada, the UK and New Zealand and the politics panel will be addressing what it takes to increase civic representation and engagement with it.

In short we'll be reflecting on the story of the community, reflecting our past, celebrating our present and shaping our future with a view to learning as much as possible from our peers across the world in order to reach success, but doing this takes a community focused on shaping the future and planning for it and this is what will separate the success of this conference from simply another opportunity for hand-wringing and self-congratulation, when we reflect on this conference in the future reflect on the outcomes that emerged from hosting from the hosting of this conference and the community coming together to plan for and secure its United future, to that end it's not about large sweeping gestures and often about the small things that you can do in the course of your day to help someone else, this can mean simply telling someone that you like and respect of what they do or offering an encouraging word to support them or even offering an ear to listen to during a difficult period, like for recent migrants who are looking for their, first job ultimately that is what Sewa is about and that's how something that can start simply with five people in a room can grow to something as big as a hundred and sixty people traveling from Singapore, New Zealand and all over Australia, setting aside their Saturday to attend a weekend conference and all of this would not be possible without the hard work of a team of volunteers from both YSPN and Sikh youth Australia collectively who have a proud history of driving the community forward and none of this would be possible without the support of every single one of you in this room and you should be proud of what the community is achieving thanks to all your hard work thank you