

SYA: DIVINE STEPS FESTIVAL

Jaspreet Sidhu

Please ladies and gentlemen put your hands together and please welcome Mr. Satwant Calais

Satwant Calais

Thank you, Jaspreet, thank you Preet [00:18 inaudible] and I'd like to acknowledge Gurmeh Singh, MP our first Sikh MP in Australia, Thank you for [00:28 inaudible] and what a wonderful day, you guys have just excelled yourself again and I think the outcome today was fantastic, let's put our hands together to thank the YSPN and team for being a wonderful Elevate 2020 and I can just imagine what 2021 is going to be just going to hit a different paradigm altogether because the energy that we saw today from you and the thought processes the intellect and the commitment is unreal, and as parents and uncle we've been through a lot here we've seen so much we have confidence that our calm, our faith is in damn good hands because of all of you here, they're in damn good hands, because you've got the commitment, you've got a passion and you understand what is really required for our community beyond self-interest and that's a beautiful part of it all so thank you, thank you wise man, thank you Ramneek thank you Karan and all the team is here Preet and all that thank you very much well done.

Now how do I start this which is my PowerPoint presentation is it loaded, it's load okay there you go, oh fantastic and so just press the forward button there, yeah, I'm a dinosaur technology so I'm told to come forward a little bit for some reason, anyway I'm here so divine steps to celebrate Guru Nanak's 550th anniversary when we started thinking about this we said we didn't want to do two things, one is not to have another kitten because every Gurdwara has one and the second thing was not to have an interfaith conference because their dime a dozen, so what we want to do is celebrate the life of Guru Nanak and in a manner that befits what he was all about and sharing that more importantly with all of Australia and all of Sydney.

Our first meeting was with a pastor, a catholic priest because we never knew what we never been this, we've never done a festival or an event of this magnitude at all and we didn't have much interaction with interfaith groups as we said today who was it today that we're very much inward focused we might you were talking about it here yeah and we were and so we went and approached a catholic pastor and he said to me Sai one after five minutes of talking tinder who was with me he said you guys will be foolish if you didn't celebrate Guru Nanak's teaching with the whole of Australia and the whole of Sydney.

He is a catholic priest telling us hello put your fingers out and do something because you've got such a wonderful faith and you've got such a wonderful reason to share it with other people and he said how he said don't worry I'll open all the doors for all the interfaith groups for you and that's how we started. A catholic freestanding aspect and so he said I've been to Pakistan I know in myself I've been there and it's just a wonderful place and you've got amazing religions of sharing so that's what we did So basically our focus was to promote interfaith our Brunei's message with our community broad Australian community and when we started this we had a collective of a lot of families and

parents and Ramneek was there in the initial meetings and we had to decide on what was the story about, what's the story that we're going to do and what Guru ring was all about and one of our parents she's an architect, her name is Nina Mann, she actually designed that logo and it's an amazing logo that was loved not only by Sikhs but by every single community because you could actually have it as one, it was a spiritual journey because everybody has spiritual journeys inwardly and outwardly and sharing that that journey and everyone has got their own pathway not one that actually is scripted by anybody it's your own personal journey is that and this logo as you can see actually tries to reflect that both inward and outward and it's your own personal journey that's why the footsteps are wrong.

We prompted from the traditionalists, why are you putting a footstep next to a conga they didn't understand what guru Nanak teaching is all about, okay we approach and we have all these communities interference, our partners they took our videos and shared it on their website and Facebooks and we had them all participating in this event. The event was held, the other thing which we decided we didn't want to have it in Parramatta or Glenwood where all the city beauties were. We wanted it in the middle of the city because that's where Australia sits in the middle of Sydney and everybody has to take notice of who you are; Sikhs and that's the challenge which we all had today and we spoke about it big time so we had it in PM1 bay next to the casino but it's lovely and we managed to get a walking route to depict the daises that guru Nanak did, he travels, 27,000 kilometers, can anybody tell me here how far are 27,000 kilometers it's a long-distance if you walked to London and back again that's not 27,000 kilometers and he did that, so he wasn't that image that you saw that was a whole man, fat, fetish right he was a fit a strong man that walked all that distance.

Change that image that's what guru Nanak was all about and he communicated with all our communities right around the world and we had the opening ceremony which was 'welcome to country', we had a secret dash that was done in English and Punjabi. We had the Australian national anthem we had 55 people from all different fields doing the national anthem and then we had Gurmehs doing the opening ceremony, we had it was fundamentally what we wanted to do was share what brew Nanak started from first was that he said the whole guru grant said only first phase to do it in musical rags, so we said hell why don't we make it a music festival rather than a talkfest, so we approached him and we went to every faith and we got them all there hill song Church, you heard of hill song church they never have ever gone or when we went, we met them when we run around other churches like the catholic church unless you'll never get still song never get sick because they don't mix with any other church they don't mix around our community but with Guruji's grace they came to our function and they did a fantastic event and so was 16 performance by seven different faiths we had four parliamentarians there, we had a Cherokee ride, we had young boys Sikh boys there one of the top 10 cyclists is a Sikh boy called Dave Raj Dervla.

He cycled from Canberra to Sydney with his mates, from Australia eight other cyclists joined them and came to the power to raise funds for charities. The other thing which we also decided that we wanted to go out and help other charities to save our concept that we all talked about today we said look let's go out and help pacific charities so which we picked two charities and we actually tried to raise funds for them, which we did and we

then had a guru Nanak's exhibition also done by one of our families her name is Nina Mondo, the logo a different original art expression of Guru Nanak's teachings paintings, she did over four or five months and it's just extraordinary and then we had a lot of family entertainment time, and then we had culture care Sikh to give and YSPN were all there with their stalls sharing their good work with others, it started in March, we had planning meetings we had to get something talking about bureaucracy. We didn't actually get our license for this event till 3:15 on the Friday night before the event, oh my god that's the beautiful information story all right, crazy it's like crazy, but we still had faith and we just pushed on and we knew we were going to get it at the end of the day but they made life tough for us.

We had lots of meetings with interfaith groups we got them engaged in a respectful and tolerant manner, we did fly drops to all the residents so they can join us so about 40 percent of our audience who are non-Sikh's we raised 60,000 for this event. We did not get a single sin for the gurdwaras we got three thousand dollars from the new South Wales government thanks, to [11:05 inaudible] because we came in very end up after their funding cycle had been finished but still, they acknowledged it and it supported the idea. So, we have our community doing crowdfunding as you're doing today to raise 60,000 and we started planning, we did in gurdwaras every week we had our meetings in households those remembers all the samosas that we had to eat and then we had a meeting with the department of multicultural and they said look do a free launch, Guruji's grace, we got Steve within 48 hours of approaching him and he didn't charge us a single cent, that was a stunning point for our whole event because that consolidated and brought the attention of a whole community right across that stream was upfront.

Launching this event and it was a fantastic turning point for the event in terms of our supporters, so we then had to prepare a delay before on the Saturday massive tents. we had two led screens three times the size of this out there and we had full stalls, we had we can see there what's happening and there was a day itself on the day our boys that cycled from Canberra then stopped [12:37 inaudible] the as a past [12:38 inaudible] they wanted to go in Mata and get guruji's blessings there and then they came to the event. So now I'm going to play this video, so how do I do that and we raised two and a half thousand dollars 2400 from selling pre-loved clothes from our ladies and we gave away 500 meals after the event to homeless in the town these cars just went away from the event and just went and gave them sign terms until you ran out of turbans and this family, the Rudy, Punjab, Punjabi it's a kangaroo group and guitar group they were up till four o'clock in the morning making pagoda half cooking pagoda 400 kilos of recording it was like and they made car all day it's amazing they want to see what these guys did here, and so we can just see that we had people going for this charity walks.

Every walk was a sponsored walk, health checks from our culture care, we had 130 artists and we had seven hours of entertainment and guess what we were only 20 minutes overtime, that's not bad for a Sikh community event we had 41 these original pieces of art eight cyclists and four parliamentarians group here and we raised 32,000 dollars for two charities: father Riley homeless kids off the street and the Cantu foundation which is a cancer foundation and the donations just came through like you guys did charity walk or Sikh to give the paintwork to our families just got together. The sort of paintings, whatever paintings they had we just optioned it down there we raised six thousand dollars, another

family said look I'm gonna do a raffle for three weeks before the event and then I said, go ahead and do it but as long as you make sure that everybody gets the price then you promise because in a festival people buy tickets and they move on, they don't have the whole day and they did it and we raised five thousand dollars just from rebels, so the success factors just finishing off.

One thing is here, a group of families secured Australia families and we talked about families today, the essence of the families it cannot be underestimated, never ran a festival before never a huge event like this before, so we sought guru's blessings and did our dust every day before we started each meeting. We did another singing his blessings, we had faith when we started the event, we had zero dollars in our balance for this event zero, we just raised twelve thousand dollars to make up the short form for the summer camp in February and then we started in March but we had a clear vision of what we wanted to do and don't want to do, our primary mission was bringing all of Sydney together, that was our aim and we had to do something that was not ever been done before in Sydney. There's never been a multicultural divine music festival in Sydney so we had extraordinary teamwork, passion where all our team members over nine months it's not easy to keep the momentum going for nine months.

Some people came and they went, we had some families that lost their parents during the event some people who had major four bypasses in their heart during the doing a planning process but they all came back when they were ready and we had to give them all support during that process and that's what I see in the YSPN too, so the next generation and that's a beautiful part of today the next generation that we are seeing they got that same spirit of guruji in them that save our spirit right so Dar and I were talking today and we went for a walk, our faith our calm is in strong hands you know and so beautiful there's all compassion support community, work, volunteers and save one with humility that's a critical element many of our good borders, unfortunately, they do save up for their egos and political purposes.

This organization both Sewa and YSPN culture care Sikh to give and all others don't, and that's a difference and that's how we have been able to sustain ourselves for 22 years on our own without any goal of money coming in it's all self-funded by every one of you here and your parents and your friends your relatives. So, thank you so much it was an amazing event, one of the outcomes is that every week we get requests from other faiths to come and join them in their prayers to join them and work with them in different things and so that is the most beautiful part that we are now actually accepted and understood by all other communities so thank you so much and well done once again.