Welcome to our first EcoSikh newsletter with news, updates, and inspiration on the environment and the Sikhs way of life.

Green Amritsar to be Represented at Conference in Asia, India

We are delighted to announce that EcoSikh will join the world’s major faiths at the Sacred Land Celebration in Asia, India this November. The meeting, which is hosted by our sister organization, the Alliance of Religion and Conservation (ARC), and attended by His Royal Highness Prince Philip will be the official launch of the Green Pilgrimage Network, of which Amritsar is a founding member. The event brings together religious leaders and urban planners from towns and cities of religious significance including Amritsar, St Abans, Bhutan, Indonesia, Jerusalem, Kanso in Nigeria, Tundanow in Norway, and of course Asia to build its case for environmental-friendliness. This will be through renewable energy, increased vegetation, and clean bathing. The event will bring together religious leaders and urban planners from towns and cities of religious significance including Amritsar, St Abans, Bhutan, Indonesia, Jerusalem, Kanso in Nigeria, Tundanow in Norway, and of course Asia to build its case for environmental-friendliness.

Punjabi Environment Summit

This summer, EcoSikh hosted the first ever Punjabi Environment Summit. The event brought together Sikh leaders, scholars, environmentalists, health professionals, farmers, business owners and industries to form a Punjabi-wide network for the environment. The event brought together leaders on both sides of the border and for the first time on the Kali Bein River spoke on the Sikh spirit and queer. "All of us are Sikh and we all need to be a part of the future," said Dr. Rajdeep Singh, speaker from Pakistan. "We need to work together to create a sustainable future for the generations to come." The event was held at Amritsar College, Millie Gur and Lushnaya - Punjab.

Guru Ka Bagh - Gurdwara Garden Project

Is your garden interested in a community garden? EcoSikh is looking to run a pilot garden project with gardener shares in the United States to provide physical activity for children and adults and fresh vegetables for healthier lifestyles. Please contact Bandana Kaur at bandana.kaur@ecosikh.org if you are interested in being one of the pilots.

Bhur Sahib Educational Trust Switches to Solar

We are excited to announce that Bhur Sahib’s Kadri Educational Trust has transitioned to solar energy in its teaching and learning environment. With over 2,500 students living in their hostel, the institute decided to approach the Ministry of Renewable Energy to connect to a solar energy plant, which will produce 120,000 kilowatt hours of energy per year.

EcoSikh at Sarang Conference on Sikh and Women

EcoSikh will be in attendance at Sarang: Our Journey Conference at the University of Toronto, Canada on October 1st, 2011. Sarang will bring together academics and Sikhs to discuss theological, historical, environmental and contemporary perspectives on Sikh women. The keynote speaker is the author of The Birth of the Khalsa: A Feminist Reading. Jeetinder S. Bagga, Professor of Sikh Studies, will speak on the role of women in the Sikh community.

Thanks to Our Summer Interns

EcoSikh expresses special thanks to our 2011 summer interns, Amritpal Kaur and Piyusha Kaur from California, and Simeone Singh from Canada, for their hard work on our Green Gardens initiative. Amritpal, a graduate of University of California Berkeley worked with Bay Area gardens to assess capacity for energy efficiency and waste reduction. Piyusha, a Master’s student in engineering from Stanford University, is helping compile our Green Gardens manual to be released this year. Skylar, a member of sustainable agriculture is compiling resources on community gardens for gardners. Thanks to these young, talented, and dedicated leaders for their hard work.

Thanks to EcoSikh Supporters

EcoSikh wishes to acknowledge and give special thanks to our Supporters and Donors, especially S. Devinder Singh and Harinder Singh from ASPI, Pvt. Ltd. for donating a Laptop to EcoSikh operations. In addition, Amrit Singh Khalsa and team from White Pitch Web Solutions Ltd. has supported EcoSikh in developing our beautiful website. This is a wonderful way to show concern and support for Earth’s well being and a contribution in every way.

And finally, a story from history:

Once, when Sri Harminder Sahib was under construction, Guru Arjan Dev ji wanted to buy high-quality strong bricks, so that they would last for many centuries. Experts from all over Punjab were hired to come to Amritsar (Ram Randhun Pat) and exhibit their work to him. A man named Brahman, who was a devotee of Sri Harmandar Singh, came to join with the aim of earning the generous prices that were part of such a large construction project. But at the very first glance of Guru ji he fell in devotion, because a Sikh and accepted the work as service for his beloved Guru.

Bhai Baldev researched the best way of producing heavy-duty bricks for the Sikh Harmandir. He discovered that, when faced with domestic garbage, bricks are produced using high-strength bricks — today, we would say that was due to the intrinsic property of the bio-fuel. He found the idea very interesting and every day he would collect garbage from the surrounding villages. He would carry it on his head and use it as fuel to bake his bricks.

On the day when the main teams of manufacturers presented their samples before Guru ji, Bhai Baldev’s bricks were selected as the best. Thus Bhai Baldev’s passionate eco-spirit and re-cycling was accepted. Guru ji hugged him to his chest and blessed him with a phrase. "Bhai Baldev sahib, you have provided a lesson!"