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His Highness the Aga Khan, 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

MEDIA RELEASE

The Aga Khan awarded with honorary degrees from UBC and SFU

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The University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University are each awarding an honorary doctorate of laws degree to His Highness the Aga Khan in a joint conferral ceremony—a first for both universities.

The honorary degrees, which will be conferred together at a ceremony in Vancouver on Oct. 19, are being awarded in recognition of the Aga Khan's lifelong service to humanity, and the intersections of his work at UBC and SFU.

"We applaud His Highness the Aga Khan's outstanding humanitarian contributions," said UBC President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Santa J. Ono. "In his capacity as spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslim community, his commitment to helping fight poverty and improve health and education for millions of people in underdeveloped and war-torn parts of the world is truly remarkable, and serves as an inspiration to us all."

"His Highness has demonstrated an exemplary international commitment to address the needs of others," said SFU President and Vice-Chancellor Andrew Petter. "He has in this context supported programs at both of our universities, and we are grateful for his generosity in promoting positive change in the lives of young people and in advancing the well-being of the communities we serve."

The Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims around the world. In realizing the social conscience of Islam, His Highness founded the Aga Khan Development Network, a global network of development agencies that operates universities, hospitals and school programs in underdeveloped and war-torn nations. He also works with Canadian governments and organizations on projects that promote inclusive, sustainable development and improve quality of life. For over 60 years, His Highness has been one of the world's leading advocates of a pluralist, cosmopolitan ethic, one that embraces human diversity as an opportunity and as an antidote to social fragmentation and division.

UBC and SFU students, faculty and staff have benefited from the Aga Khan's lifelong humanitarian work.

Through a partnership with the Aga Khan Academies' Teacher Preparation Programme, UBC's IB Education team of faculty and adjunct faculty are providing mentorship to and evaluation of teacher interns in Mombasa, Kenya, who are seeking International Baccalaureate (IB) certification.

"We are grateful to His Highness the Aga Khan for his support of our partnership, which aims to improve the educational opportunities available to young people in Africa and promote a deeper global perspective among teachers and students in B.C.," said Meredith Fenton, director of IB programs in the faculty of education at UBC. "Our partnership with the Aga Khan Academies reflects the spirit of international mindedness that our educators and learners aim to model, and to which we aspire for the benefit of our teacher candidates and future generations of children in their care."

SFU's Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies and the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations partnered to establish Expressions of Diversity, an internationally renowned summer school on Muslim diversity that provided participants with a critical-historical understanding of Muslims within larger and more diverse frameworks.

"Expressions of Diversity opened up many windows into the historical heritage and contemporary relevance of Muslim peoples globally," says Derryl MacLean, the founder of SFU's Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies. "The program was groundbreaking for its breadth and depth and played an important role in providing balanced access to the latest research on Islam and Muslims for SFU students and an international audience."

ABOUT UBC

The University of British Columbia is a global centre for research and teaching, consistently ranked among the top 20 public universities in the world. Since 1915, UBC's entrepreneurial spirit has embraced innovation and challenged the status quo. UBC encourages its students, staff and faculty to challenge convention, lead discovery and explore new ways of learning. At UBC, bold thinking is given a place to develop into ideas that can change the world.

ABOUT SFU

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded more than 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada's leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 150,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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