RELIGION AND SOCIETY: A POLICY-RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM ON IMMIGRATION, MULTICULTURALISM, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN CANADA
2 February 2011, Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue (SFU)

Summary of Proceedings
Jenny Francis, UBC

Approximately one hundred participants, including government representatives, non-governmental organizations, academic researchers, and members of the public attended this policy research symposium jointly sponsored by Metropolis BC and EmbraceBC.

Following opening remarks by **Meharoona Ghani**, *Director of the Multicultural Advisory Council Secretariat in the British Columbia Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development* and **Paul Bramadat**, *Director of the Centre for Studies and Religion and Society at the University of Victoria*, the program proceeded with three panel discussions. The event concluded in the early afternoon with closing remarks from **Paul Bramadat** and **Julie Drolet,** *Assistant Professor in the department of social work and Director of the Centre for International Social Work and Research at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC*.

Opening Remarks

Meharoona Ghani began her welcome with an acknowledgement that the symposium was occurring on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples. She then framed her discussion of why religious diversity is relevant to policy makers with an interpretation of a Koranic verse (Surat Al-Ĥujurāt 49:13): "And we made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other, not that you may despise each other for being different." To illustrate, she pointed to recent examples of racial profiling, conflicts around multiculturalism, and negative attitudes towards Muslims in particular, stating that it is these episodes of racism, oppression, and racialisation that have led her to look more deeply at how policy makers, academics, and the public can use power relations either to dismantle the us/them mentality or perpetuate an "Orientalist" view of the Other.

Meharoona stressed that violence is not specific to one group of people, nor does it have anything to do with religion per se; rather violence is created and carried out by human beings who use particular interpretations of religious texts as a form of power to dominate others. Consequently, she argued that when looking at religious diversity there is a need to proactively dismantle systemic forms of racism, power, and domination; to focus on positive approaches; and to work on relationships that foster understanding between groups of people. This is why religious diversity is relevant to policy makers and it is for these reasons that Meharoona is proud to work for EmbraceBC, a program that fosters inter- and intra-faith connections and dialogue around religious diversity among policy makers, scholars, and the public. She concluded by urging the need to further explore how diverse people contribute to Canadian society and to create spaces where positive relationships can flourish.

Paul Bramadat began his discussion of academic perspectives on religious diversity by defining a certain form of the secularisation hypothesis which posits that, because religion has become less important in the lives some Europeans, it will naturally become less important in the lives of everybody else. This universalising Eurocentric view has been challenged as religion has emerged with increasing force in recent times and interest continues to grow in the context of new communication technologies, globalisation, popular uprisings, and so forth. These global forces also play a role in the state of religion in

Canada, yet Paul noted the distinctiveness of immigration and multiculturalism in BC, which has also seen a rapid rise in numbers of people who are "spiritual, but not religious" (SBNR).

Another important concept is that of essentialism, which can take both positive (e.g. "x is the religion of peace and any other interpretation is a perversion") or negative (e.g. "religion x is all about oppressing women") forms. However, both stereotypes offer selective accounts of the way religions really work in the world, and therefore obscure more interesting accounts of how the beautiful and the ugly, the equality-enhancing and equality-ignoring tendencies that exist within each religion. Paul called for a more honest, mature, creative, and sophisticated engagement with all aspects of religion but questioned whether Canadian society is equipped to handle the complex scenarios around us, suggesting that it may not be, in part because a generation of leaders have been convinced by secularisation theories that religion will become and should be an entirely private matter. He concludes that in practice it does not work to exclude religion from the public arena; rather, issues of religious diversity need to be addressed through public dialogue to promote a truly inclusive society.

PANEL 1: Space, Place, and The Sacred: Managing Religious Diversity in a Multicultural Society

Chair: Paul Bramadat

Heidi Hoerning, *Office of Research Services, McGill University*
Justin Tse, *Department of Geography, University of British Columbia*
Sandeep Agrawal, *School of Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson University*

Heidi Hoerning: "Public Policy and Religious Diversity: Lessons from Place of Worship Development"
Heidi focused on the relationship between religious diversity and the public domain, addressing the questions, *Why does religious diversity matter to public policy and public institutions? How does it manifest? How is it important?* and *What lessons can we learn across public policy domains?* through the lens of place of worship development. Based on research conducted in the Greater Toronto Area, Heidi outlined a conceptual framework for understanding community needs in place of worship development in which religious community characteristics such as religion and culture, demographic and spatial characteristics, and resources (financial and human) combine to determine spatial needs. Religious communities' experiences of developing places of worship are further influenced by the spatial, policy, economic, and social contexts they work in. Other important considerations include temporalities (daily, weekly, annual patterns that intersect with parking patterns) and social aspects (attendance, worship behaviour, large religious events, life cycle patterns, etc.). Different religious activities are associated with particular spatial needs involving considerations of architecture, site design, and use of public space.

Places of worship often perform multiple functions, including commercial activities, settlement and integration programs, socialisation/retention activities, and symbolic expression; in place of worship development, people are seeking to address all of these needs and translate them spatially. At the same time, needs and priorities are constantly being redefined; the needs of religious communities are not static, but dynamic and changing, as individuals and communities grow, change, and learn over time. In this context, a common evolution of place of worship development moves from temporary (e.g. rental apt), to recycled (eg. purchase old church), to new construction, and finally, expansion. Fundraising is often a major issue in that progression. Overall, meeting spatial needs involves a variety of strategies including compliance, avoidance, adaptation, and accommodation. Within the evolving and dynamic process of place of worship development, the weak correlation between needs and difficulties is key.

Within the wider community, multiple readings of the development of places of worship come into play around perceived ideal characteristics of urban spaces and land use, the integration of minority groups into society, notions of sacred space, perceptions of architectural assets, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, perceived nuisance and mitigation, and value and contribution to space. Given these

issues, best practices require: addressing land use and social and political issues together; long term and holistic approaches; leadership from all sectors of society; communication and mutual understanding. Successful place of worship development is a much broader issue than simply a building. These questions are important to promote equity and avoid discrimination; one challenge for public policy is that public agencies cannot always address private actions, such as a landowner who refuses to sell their property for construction of a mosque or other religious institution.

Heidi concluded by arguing that places of worship are important to policy debates because they are sites of new forms of multiculturalism discourse that go beyond 'hosts and newcomers' to incorporate interethnic minority/majority concerns. At the same time, places of worship are also gateways of outreach that offer a variety of services and mutual learning opportunities and provide sites of connection for service provision and communication within communities.

Justin Tse: "Talking Infrastructure: Another Topic for Interfaith Dialogue from Richmond's 'Highway To Heaven'"

Justin presented preliminary findings from a Metropolis BC funded study currently being carried out with Claire Dwyer and David Ley looking at No.5 Road in Richmond BC, dubbed the "Highway to Heaven." Located on the edge of the shrinking Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) originally set up in 1972, No. 5 Road is home to over twenty religious institutions. Beginning in the 1980s with one religious institution, by the early 2000s the land was marked off by rural planners to be readily converted into assembly use. Justin argues that this rezoning policy and the concomitant interactions between religious institutions and the City of Richmond suggest a new direction for interfaith dialogue that moves beyond questions of religious cohesion.

While many people call for increased dialogue to promote consensus and prevent conflict among religious groups, Justin proposes a complementary lens to account for the fact that the situation on No. 5 Road is not characterised as much by inter-religious conflict as by conflicts around policy in relation to the secular assumptions of city planners and policy makers. In fact No. 5 Road is defined as a "miracle" or "wonder of the world" by some Richmond residents, who point not only to the lack of inter-religious conflict, but also to examples of peaceful coexistence, such as a Jewish day school and a Swami temple sharing parking lots, arguing that in other parts of the world such proximity would lead to conflict. City officials also mention parking as a key form of cooperation, and there are other examples as well.

Religious clashes do occur, for example the conflict that arose over the Buddhists' quest to buy out the German/Chinese Church parking lot. Parking was also a bone of contention between a church and a monastery that wanted to use the same parking lot for an event, causing some congregation members to complain about airwaves becoming confused with multiple spiritual signals. Justin demonstrated that these issues need to be seen in a generational context as younger people have moved away from spiritual conceptions of space towards more ideological conceptions. Moreover, it is interesting to note that most of these conflicts were intra- rather than inter ethnic in that the people involved were all of Chinese origin (the instability of the category "Chinese" notwithstanding). However, far messier problems arise over issues such as sewage disposal in the context of changing land use, suggesting that a way forward for public policy may not be inter-religious dialogue but dialogue between city officials and religious leaders and their congregations.

Indeed, sewage pipes are a sticky issue and draw attention to the need for enhanced infrastructure to sustain large assemblies where formerly none were required (the few buildings previously in existence on No. 5 made do with septic tanks). When the sewage issue arose, people on No. 5 Road collaborated pragmatically and successfully not due to religion, but due to the need to meet changing land use requirements on the ALR: one institution took the lead and the others pitched in their money to build one long pipe that services all institutions. In contrast, a sewage pipe on nearby Blundell Road failed; even though there were only three religious institutions involved and these were arguably more religiously homogenous than those on No. 5 Road, insurmountable disagreements arose over the

amount that each should pay relative to their building size and supposed sewage output. In the end a pipe was extended diagonally from the No. 5 pipe to include one institution. What is important to note is that the debate had nothing to do with religion and everything to do with building size, money, and infrastructure on newly converted ALR lands. Clearly, inter-religious conversations are needed alongside conversations between religious communities and city planners around infrastructure needs.

From the perspective of planners, land is planned for use rather than people and this understanding can entail unintended side effects for religious institutions and practices. In one example, the proposed Blundell Interchange would result in the closing off of the front of one church, forcing worshippers to enter through an alley. Members argued that this would interfere with a key religious practice, that of evangelism, because potential new worshippers could pass by or fail to find their church. In other words, it was not simply a matter of existing members knowing how to get to the church, there was also a perceived need to attract new people; therefore the interchange would undercut a key aspect of their faith. Yet another example of unintended consequences arises from the requirement of property owners to farm the back third of their lot as a condition for receiving land formerly part of the ALR. Although this requirement was rarely enforced, congregations argued that it is unrealistic for people who are not farmers, and insisted they should be able to use the land for other purposes, such as seniors' housing. The main point was that it made little sense for places of worship who are not interested in political agendas around the maintenance of ALR space to take up farming. Once again it is not interfaith dialogue that is needed, but improved dialogue around public policy, land use, and the infrastructural needs of congregations.

Working together for effective infrastructural planning requires a pragmatic approach to addressing one off as well as ongoing needs; in this context Justin argued that municipal governments need to listen to the concerns of religious institutions and take into account unintended policy consequences. He concluded that pragmatism can even facilitate spiritual gathering when land use is managed in a way that does not frustrate religious practices.

Sandeep Agrawal: "Religion and City Development"
Based on research examining issues related to religion and public policy, especially new "ethnic" places of worship in the Toronto area, Sandeep showed that when it comes to city planning and multiculturalism, religion plays a huge role. In this context, land use planning and reasonable accommodation must be central guiding principles. Further, discussions should be guided by land use questions rather than whether or not people like the religious group in question. Sandeep presented five main points:

1. There are not enough sites reserved for places of worship (he proposed that one places of worship per 10,000 population should be the minimum).

2. Site size and location are of primary importance; ethnic places of worship often serve widely dispersed congregations and require huge areas of land to contain buildings such as the Prayer Palace, which accommodates 2,000 people. In fact, ethnic places of worship are getting ever larger, requiring an average of five acres each, and their size often challenges spatial allocation by the City, which provides at most two acres of land. Consequently, in order to meet parking needs, Sandeep argued that two acres should be the minimum size. Some places of worship have obtained rezoning permits allowing them to move into industrial areas to avoid community objections and provide parking. However, these moves have come with unintended negative economic effects on employment and industrial production as places of worship often have facilities such as day care centres which cannot be located near industry. Parking remains a significant problem. Moreover, some temporary allowances have been repealed then reinstated, costing administration time and money for local governments and religious institutions.

3. Ethnic places of worship act as catalysts for new development that restructure the metropolitan area and are therefore partly responsible for demographic shifts in neighbourhoods. Faith based

neighbourhoods develop without traditional planning processes that might have intended other uses for the area.

4. The location of places of worship can lead to urban sprawl: they take up agricultural land for parking and burden infrastructure as large tracts of lands are bought up for uses that contradict mixed and compact use. Local governments are often ill equipped to deal with such situations.

5. Planning appeals processes have served places of worship well. In Toronto there are many collaborations between, for example, mosques and gurdwaras, that would not have taken place without accommodations with public policy makers. Where these negotiations take place, cultural and religious diversity has been incorporated into market and community initiatives through site specific applications. Sandeep argued that public policy makers need to plan for faith development even where there have not yet been requests, and planners should actively involve faith groups in the planning process. Shared parking arrangements should be encouraged through incentives. At the same time, in the wake of government cutbacks, governments should recognise places of worship as social service providers

Sandeep concluded that reasonable accommodation must be forged to mediate among competing objectives and priorities, and the bases of reasonable accommodation must be explicitly defined. Sustaining religious and cultural diversity should be among the goals of comprehensive plans around rezoning and land use planning. Ultimately, it is a question of human rights.

QUESTION PERIOD:

Several participants discussed the possibility of interfaith centres where people of different faiths would worship in the same space. Some interfaith initiatives such as calendars and centres for interfaith dialogue exist, and several Canadian universities have addressed these questions by developing multi-faith centres where students of different faiths can worship. However, it was pointed out that, while liberal practitioners might be content to share worship space, some religions are not willing to share (for example, some evangelicals could see sharing space as a theological shift towards liberalism). In this context, participants also discussed the need for a forum where differences can be aired, and raised the question of what it is about the Canadian public arena that makes it difficult to have discussions about incommensurate differences, and the possibility of creating a public arena where people are not punished for voicing antagonistic views. The Iona Pacific Inter-Religious Centre at the Vancouver School of Theology, UBC was noted as a hopeful example for future dialogic possibilities.

A further discussion centred around the question of what constitutes sacred space outside of worship space and the perceived need for large scale projects that involve large parking lots and enormous buildings. One participant suggested that building up in several stories or enhancing public transportation options could be possible alternatives. Another participant pointed out that for SPNRs and others, the idea of sacred space could be a valley, beach, forest, or other "natural" setting rather than a large building surrounded by acres of parking lot, and that their views also need to be considered.

Participants also raised the key question of how public policy fits into debates around religious diversity and the regulation of religious practices. Participants pointed out that multicultural legislation has long recognised religious diversity; it is now important to examine what this looks like in practice. At the same time, in the context of the many misconceptions and fears in the public arena, policy makers need to promote relationship building and proactive approaches without getting caught up in the negative context. Others pointed out that urban planning issues are a case study of how tricky it is for policy to forecast and respond to people's needs and also have a proactive role where possibly less than half the population claims a religion; within this diversity, trade-offs have to take place so continued dialogue around policy is key. Also, well intentioned policies can have unintended consequences. Finally, it is important to remember that often debates are place specific rather than models, and to consider local intersections with race, class, gender, etc. The need to bring all these questions together in reasonable accommodation is an ongoing struggle at both the policy and religious practice level.

PANEL 2: POLICY TO PROJECT – "ON THE GROUND" CASE STUDIES

Chair: Julie Drolet

Clare Whelan-Sadike, *EmbraceBC, BC Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development*
Tahzeem Kassam, *Director of Community Development, DiverseCity, Surrey BC.*
Bruce Curtis, *Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, Comox BC*
Julie Papaioannou, *Program Officer, Multiculturalism, CIC BC/Yukon*

Clare Whelan-Sadike: "EmbraceBC's Interfaith Bridging: Faith and Multiculturalism"
	Clare opened by stressing the findings of a recent federal government report showing that issues of religious diversity are growing in importance in Canada and that a successful future depends on improved understandings of the challenges raised by that diversity. The report, titled *The Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada and Research Themes on Canadian Multiculturalism 2008-2010*, was based on regional reports expressing trends and issues regarding multiculturalism and the situation for minorities; religious diversity was identified as a key issue that has not yet been sufficiently explored. Clare pointed out that the notion of religious diversity is included in the *Multiculturalism Act*, but it is only recently that pragmatic questions have arisen as debates around religious diversity, for example concerning the wearing of the *kirpan* or *hijab,* have increased. As these debates begin to dominate public forums, governments are realising that there is not adequate policy around these issues.
	The report also noted that racism and discrimination remain profound challenges, especially regarding the racialisation of religious groups. For example, Islamophobia is a distinct form of racialisation that needs to be addressed with more specific measures than general anti racism initiatives. This need highlights the importance of ensuring that anti racism programs are addressing diverse and evolving patterns of racialisation, while dialogue is needed to understand these processes so that they can be adequately addressed. Once questions around religious diversity are better understood, the role for government can be determined, and it is sure to be multifaceted. In BC the government has begun by advancing the dialogue around religious diversity through EmbraceBC in order to further explore what role government should play.
	EmbraceBC, the BC government's anti racism and multiculturalism program, launched in 2009, provides funding to communities in six priority areas, one of which is interfaith bridging. The notion of interfaith bridging was developed to respond to questions of religious diversity and multiculturalism and was the first of its kind in government programming in Canada. It is hoped that future policy and program development will be informed by the projects implemented through the program.
	Based on a recognition that faith communities are crucial to building diverse inclusive societies and fighting racism, funding is provided to build inter- and intra-faith relationships and promote understanding of intersecting identities. Projects must demonstrate relevance to faith communities in BC and at least two distinct faiths must be included in the project. Funding is not intended for use in theological activities. In order to provide opportunities for creativity, themes have been left open.
	In the first round (2009-10) six projects were funded in different communities around the lower mainland and two on Vancouver Island; there are currently eleven projects underway for 2010-11 with more applications received than accepted. Projects include the development of public education materials (see Tazheem's presentation below); interfaith dialogues (see Bruce's presentation below); conferences and symposia; and community forums aimed at learning exchanges of different faiths, exploring cultural identities, and exploring and addressing myths and stereotypes. Two specific project examples include "The Exploration of Faith and Identity of Immigrant and Refugee Youth and Families" and "An Exploration of the Role Mothers Play in fostering Children's attitudes towards Racial, Cultural and Religious Diversity." Clare stressed that the evolution from the first to the second year of funding is encouraging and highlights the relationship building that needs to be done before people can get to

actual issues; there is a need to create a safe environment first, and that is occurring partly through these projects.

Looking forward, there is a need for continued government focus on this area. Funded projects are encouraging broad discussion and dialogue around religious diversity and diversity generally and, as such, are an excellent source of information for policy makers to understand the way religious diversity is experienced and understood in Canadian society.

Tahzeem Kassam: "DiverseCity Community Resources Society's Interfaith Bridging Initiatives"

Tazheem's presentation provided a description of one of the projects funded by EmbraceBC in the first round of funding mentioned by Clare above. She began her discussion with some information about DiverseCity (DCRS), whose mission is to promote the independence of new Canadians and build strong culturally diverse communities. Established in 1978, DCRS has 168 staff and 125 volunteers. For more information, please visit www.dcrs.ca.

The foundation for the project funded by EmbraceBC was laid in 2002 when DCRS brought together people from diverse faith backgrounds for a project titled "Harmony: A Community Forum on Islam" in response to 9/11. The objective was to promote harmony between Muslims and non-Muslims and to provide a forum for enhanced understanding of Islam and Muslims in the wider community. DCRS built on that project in 2009 when they partnered with Surrey Neighbouring Faiths Program (SNFP) to develop the Multi Faith Story Time Kits Project funded by EmbraceBC in 2009. SNFP is an organisation that works to builds community capacity for multi-faith learning and dialogue with a focus on children and families. For more information about SNFP, please visit www.snfp.ca.

The Multi Faith Story Time Kits Project resulted in four multi-faith and eleven faith-specific story time kits in partnership with the Surrey Public Library. The kits consist of age appropriate resources for preschool age children intended for use by teachers, library, interfaith initiatives, faith communities, and in Early Childhood Education training. Tazheem stressed that alongside SNFP, the Surrey Public Library was key to enhancing the credibility of the kits. Importantly, library staff worked closely with members of faith communities, who in turn engaged others to encourage dialogue and gather input. As the lead organisation, DiverseCity supported this innovative and successful community capacity building initiative to enhance newcomer integration.

Tazheem noted a second project currently under way, titled "Honouring Diverse Beliefs in Our Communities." This project will produce a resource tool kit, including a twenty-five minute documentary featuring interviews with leaders from a range of community sectors in Surrey, for individuals, organisations, and institutions that wish to explore the role of diverse religious beliefs in fostering inclusive communities. The kit is intended for use in staff training in service agencies, community workshops and dialogues, post secondary institutions, faith communities, and interfaith initiatives.

Key learnings from the EmbraceBC funded projects include the finding that dialogue is an end in itself and that representatives of diverse faiths must be part of the conversations around the development of welcoming and inclusive communities. Further, projects and resources build on each other to contribute to community capacity building. DCRS also identified a real need for resources to support individuals working in the field and a willingness to use the resources that are developed. Importantly, productive interfaith dialogues can be sparked when people are brought together around a tangible round table (such as the story time kits), rather than through abstract discussion. In turn, dialogue can foster the trusting relationships that are key to inclusive communities when people are engaged in issues that matter to them. Tazheem closed by reiterating her enthusiasm about the projects and conversations that are occurring, and expressed her gratitude to EmbraceBC for leading the way.

Bruce Curtis: "Comox Valley Community Justice Centre's Interfaith Bridging Initiative"

Bruce opened his presentation about a second project funded by EmbraceBC with the quotation "right listening is the foundation of right living." He stressed that Canadians' only hope for building

compassionate and respectful relations between divergent faiths and cultures is through the development of the ability to listen deeply to one another and to maintain meaningful communication across divides, for it is what we say that either builds walls or tear them down, depending on how we listen to each other; names and words do hurt, and should be considered weapons of mass destruction.

Like Tazheeem, Bruce was extremely enthusiastic about the project funded by EmbraceBC. The goals of the project, led by the Comox Valley Community Justice Centre (CJC), were to initiate engagement with different faiths in Comox to respond to an incident of hate, whether based on gender, race, faith, or other axis of difference. In contrast to DiverseCity, CJC has only ¾ of one paid staff position, but 150 volunteers. Read more about CJC here: www.cjc-comoxvalley.com.

Although Comox is a relatively homogenous community (under ten percent of the population is non Christian and less than ten percent is non white), there is diversity, yet most community programming is designed by and appeals primarily to liberal white Canadians, leaving conservative Christians, visible minorities, and others out of the conversation. In line with its commitment to restorative justice, the CJC project was about engaging local residents, including First Nations, who are not attached to white Christian traditions and cultures. Bruce explained that, although people can see the differences among them, there is little understanding of the historical roots of difference (in part a generational issue). In this context, CJC wanted to draw people together to engage in dialogue on divisive issues. Ultimately, eight faith communities worked together to address homophobic, racist, and hate activity in the wake of an attack earlier in the year by three white men against one black man.

The dialogue consisted of five different faith rituals for initiation, cleansing, and renewal (to promote appreciation of sameness and difference, and to discuss the creation of meaning attached to these rituals within each faith and their similarities to rituals of other faiths); demonstration and practice of compassionate communication; world cafe; and a broader discussion of shared theological issues based on questions around the meanings of justice and reconciliation in different faith traditions; the event closed with a discussion of the question, "If we work together what might we be able to achieve?"

The dialogue took place over two weekends, separated by one week during which solstice was celebrated, primarily by Wicca practitioners who make up a significant minority in Comox. During the celebrations, a fundamentalist Christian couple broke into the ceremonies and accused the Wiccans present of being evil devil worshippers and eventually the police had to be called when the angry couple refused to leave. When the dialogue resumed the following week, participants spoke passionately about responding to hatred. During that discussion, Wiccans, who are normally so discriminated against that they maintain a strong aura of secrecy and rarely identify themselves, experienced solidarity and support from other faiths for the first time. The conversation that followed really brought people together, also enabling them in the final discussion to examine the racial assault mentioned above. In fact, following that assault, around one thousand people had rallied to show that such behaviour was unacceptable and did not represent the community's feelings about diversity. However, at the rally people had not identified themselves as belonging to a faith community. When they discovered that those at the dialogue were by and large the same people who had been at the rally, attendees said that in future they would organise within their faith communities and identify themselves as such in order to publically and explicitly demonstrate that they are seeking reconciliation and that they respect diversity.

Bruce identified several learnings from the project: build the bridges (people will come if invited); work around the bumps (such as time lines imposed by urban based government bureaucracies); establish relationships across the diversity divide; keep the focus of dialogue connected to shared experience in the community at large at the level of lay people; flexibility is mandatory (bring emerging events into dialogue); explicitly teach dialogic practice; and, give the future a chance (a new group of approximately twenty-five people formed to continue the dialogue on faith and social justice at monthly meetings).

As a result of this project the CJC enhanced their capacity and held a much larger subsequent dialogue. There were also positive spinoffs in the creation of a more welcoming and inclusive community. For example, a new anti-homophobic policy was passed in Comox schools: trustees said their initial

objection to the policy was overcome due to their participation in the CJC's interfaith dialogue. In another case, a town council member who had been unsupportive of CJC's work now disapproves of cultural slurs that he had not previously understood as a problem. Bruce concluded that the personal is political, that what people achieve inwardly will change outer reality, and that a constant drip can have a really corrosive effect on hardening attitudes.

Julie Papaioannou: "Multiculturalism: Inter-Action, Canada's New Multiculturalism Grants and Contributions Program"

Julie provided an overview of how the federal government's Multiculturalism Program, which envisions the creation of a Canada based on equality and respect by promoting the participation by all Canadians in the building of a welcoming and inclusive society, can address issues related to religious diversity. Julie noted that the program has recently changed direction to increase supports for community based events that foster intercultural and interfaith understanding. This has occurred as non Christian faiths have grown, increasing religious diversity and promoting multi-layered identities. At the same time, new prejudices have arisen that need to be addressed specifically, since race, ethnicity and religion constitute the justification of most hate crimes, and economic disparity among groups persists and continues to widen. In these contexts, a key aim of the Inter-Action Program, located within the Multiculturalism Program, is to improve the responsiveness of institutions to diversity by assisting them to incorporate multicultural values into their service delivery. More specifically, the objectives of the Inter-Action Project Stream are to:

1. Build an integrated, socially cohesive society by: building bridges between communities to promote intercultural understanding; fostering citizenship, civic memory, civic pride, and respect for core democratic values; and promoting equal opportunity for individuals of all origins.

2. Improve the responsiveness of institutions to the needs of a diverse population by assisting federal and public institutions to become more responsive to diversity by integrating multiculturalism into their policy and program development and service delivery.

3. Actively engaging in discussions on multiculturalism and diversity at the international level by promoting Canadian approaches to diversity as a successful model while contributing to an international policy dialogue on issues related to multiculturalism.

Priorities for the most recent round of project funding focused on youth, youth at risk, faith communities/organisations, and immigrants. Thematic priorities centred on citizenship rights and responsibilities, and facilitating positive interaction among different cultural, ethnic and religious communities in Canada. Project proposals are in but have not yet been adjudicated.

In addition to the Projects Stream, Inter-Action also comprises an Events Stream that accepts proposals on an ongoing basis. Funding is provided for events that support the building of an integrated, socially cohesive society by building bridges to promote intercultural understanding, or by fostering citizenship, civic memory, civic pride, and respect for core democratic values grounded in Canadian history. Events must also demonstrate involvement of more than one cultural, religious or ethnic community and establish concrete opportunities for positive interaction among them, and help foster intercultural or interfaith understanding, civic memory and pride, and/or respect for core democratic values. For further information about funding opportunities through the Events Stream, please email Julie at BCY-CBY-Multi@cic.gc.ca.

QUESTION PERIOD:

Participants discussed the difficulties of obtaining grants for small and emerging organisations, given the challenges of writing successful proposals. Some people urged the development of partnerships with large organisations to help address this issue, arguing that both organisations are enriched by the experience of collaboration. Sending members of smaller organisations to skills development workshops

on proposal writing was also suggested. At the same time, funders were urged to take into account the capabilities and experience of smaller organisations when choosing which projects to fund.

Finally, a participant announced a project called Humanity's Team which has been recognised by the UN and granted the 24th of October for Global Oneness Day (www.global-oneness-day.org).

PANEL 3: OPEN DISCUSSION: POST-SECULARISM

Paul Bramadat, *Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria*
Julie Drolet, *School of Social Work, Thompson Rivers University*

Paul Bramadat opened the discussion of post secularism by differentiating between secularisation and secularism. Secularisation is a historical process where powers associated with religious organisations come to be associated with other organisations such as the state; also associated with this idea was the assumption that this process would unfold in the same way across the all modern liberal democracies, and likely across the globe. In contrast, secularism is an ideology, i.e. the belief that secularisation is a good thing.

Paul also outlined the differences between closed secularism and open secularism. The former posits that the public arena ought to be entirely free from religious discourse and identity in order to decrease conflict. In this conception, people "check their religion at the door." Open secularism is a condition where the state is non- but not anti-religious, and public arenas are places where people can enter as Christians or with any other religious identity; in other words, they participate in public processes as full people with all their identities intact. The notion of open secularism has developed out of a broad realisation that the "don't ask, don't tell" policy underlying closed secularism does not work in practice. However, open secularism does not mean that arguments made in the public arena will be accepted merely because there exists a theological basis for a particular proposition. For example, arguments based on scripture must also be backed up with reasons that pertain to the community more generally. The point is that under open secularism the arena is open enough for people to express all of their reasons for holding a certain position. Paul suggested that the question for debate is whether Canadian society is moving towards a conception of open secularism.

Julie Drolet began her remarks by reaffirming that the question of religion is playing an increasing role in public discussions around multiculturalism in Canada and that there is a clear need for ongoing dialogue, as well as a need for research to consider the role of how religion and religious institutions affect the settlement experiences of newcomers. She also pointed out that diversity is increasing due to globalisation and other influences affecting perceptions of pluralism and immigration that are likely to continue to increase. Consequently, there is a need to understand multiculturalism in this context, alongside discussions of mutual accommodation, equality, meaningful participation, and the negative processes of racism and racialisation. Julie stressed that considerations of diversity must take into account intersectionalities (of race, gender, age, ability, sexuality, religion, etc.) because people have multiple identities, yet at the policy level an understanding of how all these factors come together is only beginning to develop. She also raised the question of what it means to be an ally in a diverse, welcoming, and inclusive community, noting that every person in society has a role to play if everyone's needs and concerns are to be met.

OPEN DISCUSSION/QUESTION PERIOD:
Discussions centred around questions of education and religious literacy; a comparison of multiculturalism, inter-culturalism, and cooperative culturalism; and the meaning of social change.

Several participants mentioned a lack of religious literacy training for teachers and called on governments, universities, and teachers' colleges to address that gap. Without intervention, Canadian society will continue to experience generations of graduates who are at a practical deficit when it comes to handling the religious diversity that characterises contemporary Canada. One participant pointed out that at UBC, religious studies are confined to ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultures, to the exclusion of current beliefs and practices. Another participant suggested that this situation may stem from historical processes whereby BC was settled by particular kinds of secular pioneers who sought to put restrictive religious practices behind them, noting that in central Canada it is common to find contemporary religious studies courses in post secondary institutions. Another participant pointed out that some teaching of contemporary religious beliefs occurs in high schools in subjects such as Social Justice 12 or Civilization 11. This person also suggested that because curriculum review is such a lengthy process, social activism among individual teachers may be a more effective route towards increasing religious literacy in schools. Some people suggested that the successful teaching of religious literacy depends on the "mainstreaming" of religious studies, in the same way that efforts have been made to mainstream gender in policy and higher education; this could overcome fears that teachers may be passing on incorrect or prejudicial information.   Education is an ongoing challenge as teachers and administrators also have to work against media stereotypes that often have deep historical roots.

In terms of religious literacy in policy, one participant suggested that trust in political leaders who lack basic information about the faiths practiced by their constituents will remain low unless governments take active steps to address the lack of knowledge. Further underlining the importance of religion in policy discussions, it was noted that if religion were removed from the conversation in European countries currently rejecting multiculturalism, there would be a radical shift in the debate. The future of Canadian multiculturalism depends on addressing current stereotypical approaches around holidays, employment, dress, and other issues for which there is currently no road map available; participants expressed their hope that events such as this symposium could aid in the development of tools to address current issues around religious diversity.

Participants discussed the meanings and relevance of terminology around multiculturalism. Some saw important differences between multi- and inter-culturalism; others argued that multiculturalism implies a two way street whereby both newcomers and societies need to adapt and therefore includes a notion of inter-culturalism. One participant proposed the concept of cooperative culturalism, which also recognises that societies are fluid and evolving. The philosophy underlying cooperative culturalism is that all members of society are part of the same cooperative as equal players. In this conception, expressing negative views about one group implies saying something negative about one's own group; at the same time, if part of the group is experiencing disadvantage, the whole group is disadvantaged, and improving the situation for one improves the situation for all.

On the question of positive social change, participants stressed that change does not happen overnight but rather over decades and, moreover, requires significant sacrifice and consistent alliance building. One participant raised the question of how to connect to those on the periphery who do not wish to engage in the conversation around diversity and equality, those whose ideology sees such engagement as a compromise of their religious values. It was proposed that even asking people to have that discussion could imply the imposition of an ideology. Participants agreed that to move forward with positive social change it is necessary to continue bringing the themes of intersectionality and antiracism into debates around religious diversity, noting that multiculturalism is not a tool of enforcement but does create important opportunities for ongoing dialogue and conversation. The important thing is to keep adding drops to the bucket and the Symposium was seen as one such drop.

Paul Bramadat and Julie Drolet closed the session by thanking attendees for their participation and urging a continuation of the dialogue.