

**Citation for His Highness the Aga Khan by Dr. Elizabeth Cannon,
President of the University of Calgary
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Your Highness,

The University of Calgary is honoured today to recognise the friendship, partnership, and the spiritual example of His Highness the Aga Khan, the Imam of the Shia Ismaili community.

His Highness is the beloved leader of fifteen million Ismailis, a global community representing the abundant traditions and values of a people who have enriched culture and pluralism in more than twenty-five nations.

Here in Canada, Ismaili Muslims contribute enormously to the fabric of diversity that we cherish so much. Their superb intellectual and educational background and their integrative cosmopolitanism are outstanding. Their ethos of working to relieve hardship, pain, and ignorance shapes their social conscience, but extends to all around them.

His Highness' concern for the arts, science, and economic development illuminates Ismaili tradition. He leads this resilient and altruistic community who believe that faith is demonstrated by contributing to the general welfare and doing good for all. The Ismaili presence in our radiantly diverse and youthful city has greatly benefitted Calgarians.

We tend, in our secular time, to relegate the spiritual to a separate sphere, as if it has no bearing on the daily challenges presented by all that is sublunary. His Highness teaches by example that these elements are not divergent, but related, parallel passions that can fruitfully interact in the worldly world. His contemporary interpretation of the faith of Islam, through changing contexts, has been a superior guide to maintaining a balance between metaphysical wellbeing and individual quality of life. His respect for ethical connection, responsibility and trust nevertheless embraces evolving beliefs.

His Highness is the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, a direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon Him. Born in Geneva, His Highness spent his childhood in Nairobi, Kenya, attended school in Switzerland and graduated from Harvard University.

These seem small details, but they sparked His Highness' many humanitarian and educational initiatives, all of which model an extraordinary ideal of stewardship for this leader's sophisticated awareness of our changing planet.

Most of all, His Highness apprehends the intricacies of a sometimes turbulent era with engaging grace. In that spirit, the entire world looks to his generous and constructive éminence with respect and admiration. In these disquieting times, His Highness has undertaken to grapple with challenges. His work seeks to better material conditions for those less fortunate, but also to deploy strategic resources at a time when sudden changes and unexpected developments discourage progress. His concern for health and education goes far beyond mere aspiration. He



is a meaningful force in international development, reshaping the horizon of hope and ethically pragmatic progress.

His Highness's effective vitality as a leader is evidenced in the Aga Khan Development Network, which includes among its many agencies two universities - the Aga Khan University and the University of Central Asia. Those organisations are both foundational nuclei for health, education, development, protection of the environment, and cultural and economic revitalisation. Most important, they advance the ideal of a civil society, so fiercely necessary at this time, in this current climate of division and disrespect. His Highness is a living manifestation of how we must work together to support human advancement, at home and around the world.

As founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network, a group of international agencies dedicated to uplifting quality of life in the areas of health care, education, social services, architecture, cultural preservation and restoration, economic development, rural development, urban development and civil society, he builds bridges and creates opportunities for increasing prosperity to all locally and internationally.

The Aga Khan Development Network's agencies include Health Services, Education Services, Academies, and Microfinance, as well as the Aga Khan Foundation, the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, the Aga Khan University and the University of Central Asia. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture co-ordinates multiple cultural activities, including the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Historic Cities Programme, Aga Khan Music Initiative, Aga Khan Museum, and Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard and MIT.

Here, in Canada, we have benefitted from unique initiatives that the Imam has spawned, including the Aga Khan Museum and the Global Centre for Pluralism, and of course, the Aga Khan Garden of Alberta which His Highness inaugurated in Edmonton yesterday.

The Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development is dedicated to promoting entrepreneurship and economic enterprise in the developing world, often in countries with a need for outside investment. The health network supports 325 centres in multiple countries; and educational strategies include 240 schools determined to dismantle obstacles to educational access and achievement.

This Network is His Highness' tangible way of bringing together faith and action, diligently seeking solutions to hunger, poverty, illiteracy and ill health. His Highness has been instrumental in forging universal ideals and aspirations, promoting pluralism, compassion, cultural amplitude, and human dignity. His measure is that of a significant figure in international development, one who has literally reshaped its landscape.

Here at the University of Calgary, we too have benefitted from a generative relationship with His Highness' visionary reticulations. Positive connections with our Faculties of Graduate Studies, Nursing, Arts, and the Werklund School of Education, have focused on the essential work of education, international development, health and wellness, and social and human rights.

This collaboration has informed the evolution of the Faculty of Arts' Arabic Languages and Culture program, which engages students in learning about Muslim civilisations, languages and cultures. Events like the celebration of Milad-un-Nabi provide a unique opportunity for our students to gain deeper cultural understanding and knowledge surrounding Islamic civilisations.

Our collaboration is rich and varied. We have engaged with the Aga Khan University through the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholars and Advanced Scholars Programs participating in research opportunities at AKU campuses in Pakistan, Kenya and Uganda, and we have welcomed their international researchers here.

The University of Calgary's Faculty of Nursing develops through this project, future leaders in global citizenship in the areas of child and maternal health, neo-natal child health and perinatal mental health. Students from the Faculty of Arts and the Werklund School of Education participate in placements at AKU. And the Cumming School of Medicine will, in coming years, partner with the Aga Khan University on research and practice in cardiac sciences.

There, in that word - *cardiac* - resides a crucial evocation. Heart is the kernel of what His Highness embodies: heart, a passion to inspire, not only through words, but with actions. Our Ismaili students, faculty, and staff share this passion and volunteer selflessly to advance the principles he models.

In the great chain of thinkers, those who encapsulate the poetry and vision of human reason, His Highness has fostered social justice as a dream that all yearn to achieve. He stands as a living legend, a model for every conscience.

We Canadians share that dream with His Highness, who is an honorary Canadian citizen.

And apparently, this city, Calgary, shares with His Highness a love of fast horses. From its earliest days, Calgary was known as "horse town," and equine speed has resonated from the long history of our indigenous peoples to the present. Here, on the rolling prairie and the incipient foothills, horses symbolize our landscape and our aspiration, and we hope that His Highness will continue to share those dreams of freedom, beauty and action.

Our laudation does only small justice to His Highness' example and his urgent message that we build bridges, make friendships, and find common ground with all faiths. He commissions everyone to reflect on those who have contributed to our lives, and to remember the importance of contributing to the lives of others.

We are today, grateful to be in His presence, and honoured that He has accepted our tribute.

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