



HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN

His Highness the Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and Founder and Chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), one of the largest private development agencies in the world. In Islam's ethical tradition, religious leaders not only interpret the faith but also have a responsibility to help improve the quality of life in their community and in the societies amongst which they live.

The Ismailis are a global, multi-ethnic community whose members, comprising a wide diversity of cultures, languages and nationalities, live in Central Asia, the Middle East, South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and North America. Since taking on his role as Imam in 1957, the Aga Khan has been deeply engaged in improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable populations, while emphasizing the need to uphold human dignity as well as respect for tolerance and pluralism.

The AKDN is active in over 30 developing countries employing some 80,000 people with the support of tens of thousands of volunteers. The Network's underlying ethic is that of compassion for the most vulnerable in society and service to humanity without regard to faith, origin or gender.

Evolving from His Highness' commitment to improving the quality of life and opportunities for communities in specific regions of the world, the AKDN brings together a number of agencies, institutions and programs to address complex development issues. Its areas of focus include the provision of quality healthcare and education services, cultural and economic revitalization, micro-enterprise, entrepreneurship and economic development, the advancement of civil society and the protection of the environment.

AKDN has developed collaborative and often innovative partnerships with public and private institutions from around the world, including governments, international multilateral organizations, private sector companies, universities, foundations and other civil society organizations.

Initiatives in Canada include the establishment of the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamate and the Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa; the Ismaili Centre in Vancouver; and the Ismaili Centre, the Aga Khan Museum, and their Park in Toronto.



In recognition of his exceptional efforts and contributions to human development and improving the condition of societies globally, the Aga Khan has, over the last six decades, received numerous decorations, honorary degrees, and awards from institutions and nations across the world. He is an honorary Canadian Citizen and has been inducted into the Order of Canada. In February of 2014, His Highness the Aga Khan was the first faith leader to address both the Members of the Senate and the House of Commons.

Notes:

1. As a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and the Fatimids, the Egypt-based dynasty that founded Cairo and ruled much of North Africa and the Middle East from the tenth through the twelfth centuries, the Aga Khan retains the hereditary title of “Prince.” The title of “Aga Khan” dates to 1818, when Hassan Ali Shah, the 46th Ismaili Imam, was granted the honorary hereditary title of “Aga Khan” by the Shah of Persia. The title “His Highness” was granted by Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain in 1957.
2. In recent generations, His Highness’ family has followed a tradition of service in international affairs. His Highness’ grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan, was President of the League of Nations and His Highness’ father, Prince Aly Khan, was Ambassador to the United Nations. His uncle, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, was the United Nations’ High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations’ Coordinator for Humanitarian and Economic Assistance to Afghanistan and United Nations’ Executive Delegate of Iraq-Turkey border areas.
3. Born on December 13, 1936 in Geneva, Switzerland, His Highness spent his early childhood in Nairobi, Kenya, attended school in Switzerland and graduated from Harvard University in 1959 with a BA Honors Degree in Islamic history.



HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN AND CANADA

His Highness the Aga Khan has a long-standing relationship with Canada, dating back to the arrival of the first Ismailis in the 1950s and 1960s as part of a professional pool that immigrated to Canada from the United Kingdom and western European countries. This steady growth continued until the early 1970s when political changes in many Asian and African countries led to the arrival of large numbers of Ismailis in Canada. Today, approximately 100,000 Ismailis are settled throughout Canada.

In Canada, institutions established by His Highness include the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, an agency of the worldwide Aga Khan Development Network, registered in 1980 as a Canadian charity, as well as the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam in Ottawa; the Global Centre for Pluralism; the Ismaili Centre in Vancouver; and the Aga Khan Museum, the Ismaili Centre, and Park in Toronto. These institutions reflect the permanent presence and values of the Ismaili community in Canada, as well as the role that the Ismaili Imam has had historically, as well as in contemporary times, in creating opportunities for individuals and institutions to learn from one another and work together to improve the human condition. Canada was selected as the site of these institutions in recognition of the values shared by Canadians and the Imam, such as pluralism, meritocracy and democracy.

Aga Khan Foundation Canada

The Government of Canada and the Aga Khan Foundation cooperate on development projects around the world, including in Afghanistan, Pakistan and eastern Africa. Collaboration has been particularly strong in promoting maternal, newborn and child health - one of Canada's key development priorities. In Afghanistan, for example, the collaboration supports healthcare and girls' education in three provinces, whilst in Pakistan, the collaboration benefits women's only markets and community-based savings groups. In Mali, the Foundation and the Canadian government work together on early childhood education and in Mozambique, the two entities support a number of agricultural projects. For more information, see www.akfc.ca

Global Centre for Pluralism

The Global Centre for Pluralism is an independent, not-for-profit international research and education centre located in Ottawa, Canada. Inspired by the example of Canada's inclusive approach to citizenship, the Centre works to advance respect for diversity worldwide, believing that openness and understanding toward the cultures, social structures, values and faiths of other peoples are essential to the survival of an interdependent world. The Global Centre for Pluralism is an initiative of the Ismaili Imam and the Aga Khan Development Network in partnership with the Government of Canada. To learn more, visit www.pluralism.ca

Delegation of the Ismaili Imam

Situated along Sussex Drive in the heart of Ottawa's diplomatic district, the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam reflects the Ismaili Imam's continuing aspirations towards building peace, enhancing pluralism and promoting international dialogue. In 2012, the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam was named a recipient of the Governor General's Medal in Architecture.

