

Issue II
July 28, 2017

Casa Laxmi News



Dear Friends, Members and Advisors:

The last few weeks have been a whirlwind! We've made tremendous progress on many fronts and we are so excited to share these developments with you. Lots of travel, lots of new people and of course, lots of fun.

Inter-American Development Bank

Some of our team members recently visited the Inter-American Development Bank ("IADB") in Washington D.C. The IADB is the largest source of funding for development projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. But more importantly, and the reason for our visit, the IADB has an infinite network within the region. They have officially labelled our project a development project (essentially a project that will increase the standard of living for the residents of an impoverished region), and has offered to connect us with other organizations and people who might be able to assist us along the way.

For example, let's talk solar panels. Solar energy is a fantastic source of renewable energy, and there's certainly plenty of access to it in the Bahamas. What most people don't realize is that the quality of solar panels varies so greatly. In some cases, the amount of fossil fuels that needs to be burned in order to manufacture one solar panel does more harm to the environment than the good that that one solar panel will do throughout its life.

The IADB will be instrumental in guiding us on the development aspects of the project and we look forward to their continued support.



From left to right: Kiran Kulkarni, Sonal Thomas, Arun Kulkarni – Washington DC



From left to right: Arun Kulkarni, Kiran Kulkarni, Sonal Thomas – Washington DC

University of Guelph

Last week we met with the University of Guelph and ten faculty members of the Ontario Agricultural College (“OAC”), including its Dean. The OAC is world-renowned and the amount of expertise and resources it boasts are just tremendous. Our project was very well received by the University and they are all eager to help in any way they can.

As you all know, in an effort to teach our students respect for the environment, we need to help them create a connection to the earth and to foster that connection. One of the ways we plan on doing this is by devoting 30-50 acres of our campus to creating an organic farm. Our intention is to have the OAC spearhead this aspect of the project – determine which crops should be grown, training staff, equipping the farm, and everything else that’s farm-related.

Incidentally, the OAC informed us that 30-50 acres will be more than sufficient to fully sustain the Institute. The advantage to this is that we can now offer any excess to the local community, whether it be to shelters or children’s homes.

The OAC will be meeting internally to summarize the assistance they can provide so we can determine how to move forward with a formal engagement.



Casa Laxmi visits the University of Guelph
Sonal Thomas and Shalaka Kulkarni

Think Global School

In our first newsletter, we had introduced you to Think Global School (“TGS”). Joann McPike, the founder of TGS, visited us in Toronto. She is an incredible lady who has truly transformed education by creating the world’s first travelling high school. She was a wealth of knowledge and information, and also willing to assist in way possible.

Interestingly, Joann explained that TGS recently dropped the IB curriculum and opted for a project-based one. The IB was too rigid and it was difficult to work within its confines. In a project-based model, the students are encouraged to create a project based on their areas of interest and the teachers will guide the project to ensure that it covers the learning objectives that are required for a particular grade level. It seems to be a very unique approach, and one that we could consider. We will be sure to consult the education experts on our team to see if something like this, or a variation thereof, could work for the Institute.

The Bahamas

Last, but certainly not least, we travelled to Nassau recently for some very important meetings. First, we met with the newly-appointed Minister of Education, the Honourable Jeffrey Lloyd. Minister Lloyd was very excited with our project and truly saw the benefits it would bring to the country. Education has been a passion of his since before his ministerial appointment and he strongly believes that the Institute could be the future of education. In addition to education, he has been a big advocate of developing the whole child, and removing the focus from just academics. Accordingly, our emphasis on emotional intelligence and empathy really resonated with him. He is going to speak to his team about our proposal and the next step will be to make a presentation to the Cabinet and secure the approvals we require in short order.



Next, we met with Obie Wilchcombe, the former Minister of Tourism for the Bahamas. Mr. Wilchcombe is equally as enthusiastic about our project and is very well-connected in the country. With great advocates on our side based in the Bahamas, particularly those who are more concerned with the country than with bureaucracy, we are sure to make waves!
