

SPOTLIGHT ON MISSION

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Canadian content enhances Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit

"This is a huge deal for us and for church leaders," says executive director Scott Cochrane

Frank Stirk
Special to ChristianWeek

KELOWNA, BC—This is a year of firsts for The Leadership Centre Willow Creek Canada's Global Leadership Summit (GLS), a two-day simulcast conference to encourage and strengthen local church leaders.

For 11 years, it has been simulcast on the same dates in August as its Chicago-based affiliated organization, the Willow Creek Association.

But not this year. Faced with feedback that summer was not the ideal time for such an event, the GLS will be recorded for broadcast on September 29 and 30. Not only is that more convenient for many people, says executive director Scott Cochrane, it also allowed them to add a Canada-only "bonus" to the speakers lined up—its first-ever Canadian speaker.

That person is Tim Schroeder, the teaching pastor at Trinity Baptist Church in Kelowna and a long-time member of Willow Creek Canada's board of directors.

Schroeder says he will preface his address by interviewing University of Lethbridge sociologist Reginald Bibby on his latest diagnosis of the health of the Church in Canada.

"The feeling that the Church is on the verge of death

and is going to fold its tent and go away is just not reality. Reg's data is pointing to sparks of life," he says. "We're seeing pockets of churches that are rising up and doing some phenomenal things. So our mission will be to pour gas on some flames that we believe already exist."

"This is a huge deal for us and for church leaders," says Cochrane. "We're going to use this event to have essentially a leaders' heart-to-heart talk, a real sense of instilling hope and vision into what God is doing already in the Church in Canada."

Among the other 12 speakers this year are cultural architect and pastor Erwin McManus, clinical psychologist Henry Cloud, Starbucks president and CEO Howard Schultz, Australian historian and social commentator John Dickson, and Mama Maggie Gobran, a 2011 Nobel Peace Prize nominee who ministers among Cairo's poor.

Holding the Canadian event separately also gives the 22 locations across the country where it will be broadcast more flexibility in terms of local start times. "We're going to allow each site to start at a time that works best for them," says Cochrane.

Bill Hybels, the founder and senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, launched the GLS in 1995 based on the belief, as he says on the GLS web site,

that if the local church is "to reach its redemptive potential, it must be...led by godly, servant-oriented, fired-up, humble, growing leaders...But that means those of us with leadership gifts...have to take responsibility for our own leadership development."

From just 400 people at Willow Creek that first year, the GLS rapidly added satellite sites across the U.S. In 1999, the first two Canadian sites were added, followed by many more since then. In fact, Cochrane says, "90 per cent of English-speaking church leaders in Canada are now within a 90-minute drive of at least one of our GLS sites."

About 8,000 people are expected to attend this year's GLS, up from 7,000 last year.

And neither is it just for pastors. Pointing to the experience of one B.C. church, Cochrane believes there is a direct correlation between the number of people a church sends to The Global Leadership Summit and the number who come to Christ through that church's ministry.

"They realized that by bringing a large team to the GLS every year," he says, "they were embracing the same values, using the same language and leveraging the summit to inspire the congregation to get about the Kingdom's work."

Spots

- Globally, more than 120,000 people in over 70 countries experienced last year's summit with the aid of translations into multiple languages. This year's attendance could top 150,000.
- Trinity Western University offers course credits to students who attend the summit.
- The northernmost site in Canada for this year's summit is in Fort McMurray, Alberta. The southernmost site is in Windsor, Ontario.
- At a GLS a few years ago, Bill Hybels interviewed U2 lead singer Bono on how churches can get involved in AIDS relief work in Africa.
- For more information about the Global Leadership Summit 2011, visit www.growingleadership.com/summit

ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 - 30, 2011, leaders representing an amazing diversity of denominations, cultures, ethnicities, and vocations are coming together to develop their unique leadership gifts. The Global Leadership Summit is simulcast across Canada from coast to coast. Register today! growingleadership.com/summit | 800.804.0777



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