
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture

New project to showcase Punjabi Canadian history in B.C.

VANCOUVER – British Columbia is celebrating the contributions of the Punjabi Canadian community to its economy, history and culture through the development of new educational supports, exhibits and online resources.

The project is part of the Province’s commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive society.

“The Punjabi community has a long and unique history that has contributed significantly to the strength and success of our province,” said Premier John Horgan. “The Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project will share these stories with future generations, while honouring the resilience and diversity of our multicultural communities.”

The Province is providing \$1.14 million to the Abbotsford Community Foundation to create and deliver Haq and History: A Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project in collaboration with the South Asian Studies Institute of the University of the Fraser Valley and other community partners.

Haq and History reflects on the right of Punjabi Canadians in British Columbia to record their vast and significant history, correct and enhance the public educational and historical records, and create community legacies that extend beyond the current time for future generations. The project will showcase the valuable contributions of the Punjabi community in B.C. to its economy, history and culture, and the community's resilience in the face of injustice and discrimination.

“British Columbians need opportunities to learn more about the people that comprise our diverse and multicultural society,” said George Chow, MLA for Vancouver-Fraserview. “The Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project will provide great insight into a unique part of our province’s history, help build intercultural connections and foster respect and appreciation among people of all backgrounds.”

The project will continue to be developed over the next few years to include:

- provincewide digitization of South Asian Canadian collections, including artifacts, photos, texts, materials, oral histories and other resources for the online South Asian Canadian Digital Archive;
- creation of a travelling exhibition on South Asian Canadian history;
- documentation and marking of sites that are of historic importance to South Asian Canadians and B.C. communities;
- development of Punjabi Canadian learning resources for social studies curriculum in B.C. schools;
- research and development of an online comprehensive B.C. Labour Movements Social Histories Research Project; and

- production of a public history book - South Asian Canadian Social History Project.

“Education is key to fostering a greater respect and appreciation for one another across our multicultural society,” said Satwinder Kaur Bains, director of the South Asians Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley. “A primary goal of the project is to improve the historical record of the significant contributions of Punjabi Canadians, with the goal to reduce racism while underscoring the value of B.C.’s diverse society.”

The development of Haq and History: A Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project was led by the Punjabi Legacies Advisory Committee with South Asian Canadian community partners in Golden, Prince George, Vancouver Island, Kelowna, Vancouver, Surrey and Abbotsford. This project is consistent with the call for development of educational resources on the histories and contributions of racialized and Indigenous communities in B.C., heard during the government’s community consultations on racism and hate in the summer of 2019.

Quick Facts:

- Established in 2015, the primary purpose of the Punjabi Canadian Legacy Advisory Committee is to support and develop ways to preserve, explore and share the contributions of South Asian Canadians.
- To date, projects completed under the committee include: the development of new educational materials for the Royal BC Museum’s Punjabi Pioneer Food History Project, consultations throughout the province with South Asian Canadian families and the creation of the South Asian Historic Places Project, an inventory of South Asian heritage sites with Heritage B.C.
- According to the latest census from Statistics Canada, 363,885 (8%) of British Columbians identified their ethnic origin as South Asian, with 38,725 (1%) specifying Punjabi.
- From 2014-18, police-reported hate crime increased in B.C. and South Asian Canadians were consistently among the top five racialized communities reporting incidents.

Learn More:

For photos of Premier Horgan’s visit to Vancouver to talk to people about the project, visit: <https://lightroom.adobe.com/shares/0ff3d758cd124260b18278f0204d3802>

For more information about the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley, visit: <https://www.ufv.ca/sasi/>

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