

# PUNJABI LEGACY PROJECT

## Linking BC's Punjabi Canadians

The Royal BC Museum, in partnership with the [South Asian Studies Institute \(SASI\) at the University of the Fraser Valley \(UFV\)](#), and in consultation with the [Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project Advisory Committee](#), is engaging with British Columbia's Punjabi communities, organizations and individuals to create a **Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project**.

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**This project promotes an understanding of the living landscapes and cultures of British Columbia and engages people in a dialogue about their future.**

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This work aims to preserve, explore and share the contributions Canadians of Punjabi descent have made to BC and Canada. This project is based on community engagement and intercultural dialogues. The opportunity to do this work through partnerships has occurred at the time when the Royal BC Museum is re-considering its core galleries and the retelling of BC stories, as well as the gap in the multicultural collections.

The partnership team has endeavored to be open to criticisms of the

past and justifiable skepticism of the future. The project provides a forum for debate where differing perspectives can be explored and critical thinking developed.

In Phase 1 of this project, 2014-2016, we completed [The Punjabi Pioneer Food History Project](#) (2014-2015), which is a new digital collection of 92 oral history interviews, made possible with the support of the W. Garfield Weston Foundation. Phase 1 also saw the development of [educational material](#) for the Royal BC Museum Learning Portal in 2015.

During Phase 1, the first Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project Advisory Committee was launched as well as a [province-wide Community Consultation project](#). The Consultation project included a gallery intervention event at the Royal BC Museum and seven consultations (Abbotsford, Prince George, Golden, Duncan, Vancouver, Surrey and Kamloops), reaching more than 700 community leaders and members, made possible by a philanthropy grant from the H.Y. Louie Co. Ltd. All consultation reports are available online. Another part of the project was the successful launching of the South Asian Historic Places Project in partnership with the Province of British Columbia.

In Phase 2 of this project, 2017-2018, the Royal BC Museum completed a successful run of the Canada 150 exhibition *Family: Bonds and Belonging* in June-October 2017. The core component of the exhibit was featuring South Asian families, including key family collections of textiles, videos, images and letters.

Phase 2 also launched “community hub building” in the seven provincial regions, through community workshops and oral history collecting, with the support of a \$68,000 *British Columbia | Canada 150: Celebrating B.C. Communities and their Contributions to Canada* grant received by SASI in partnership with Royal BC Museum.



## Project Organizers:

Janet MacDonald is Head of Learning at the Royal BC Museum, overseeing all public and school programming activities. In developing programs, she seeks to explore and ensure a balance between existing popular programs and innovative initiatives.

Tzu-I Chung is Curator of History at the Royal BC Museum. She was named the Exemplary Diversity Scholar by the National Centre for Institutional Diversity at the University of Michigan.

Satwinder Bains is the Director of the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley and Associate Professor in Social Cultural Media Studies, College of Arts. Her current research interests include: South Asian Diaspora studies; Sikhism and the politics of identity; cultural historiographies; migration, settlement and integration; race, racism and ethnicity; and minority rights and cultural politics.

Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra is the Coordinator at the South Asian Studies Institute and Curator at the Sikh Heritage Museum in Abbotsford. Sharn is currently a PhD student in the Department of History at UBC.

**Photo:** Community Workshop in Golden Sikh Temple in Summer 2017.  
Photo credit: Royal BC Museum