

Lesson: The Punjabi Experience in British Columbia

OVERVIEW

This lesson plan is a companion to the Indo-Canadian oral history collections compiled by the Centre for Indo Canadian Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley found on the Royal BC Museum Learning Portal, *The Punjabi Experience in British Columbia*. These interviews outline the Punjabi experience of immigrating and adapting to Canada.

This lesson invites students to use the oral histories collection to gain better understanding of the culture and everyday life of Punjabi immigrants through these first-hand accounts.

KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

Punjab, Punjabi, Indo-Canadian, Cultural Identity, Multiculturalism, Diversity

ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED One 40-45 minute period

SUBJECT Social Studies

GRADE LEVEL Secondary

OBJECTIVES

Students will work with primary sources to gain a better understanding of Punjab/Indo-Canadian experiences through the use of taking an historical perspective.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:

- Obtain information from a selection of primary sources
- Take historical perspective

- Students will be able to make evidence-based inferences about the ideals and values of those from the past

MATERIAL

The Indo-Canadian oral history collections compiled by the Centre for Indo Canadian Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley found on the Royal BC Museum Learning Portal (6 video accounts, varying in length but no longer than 16 minutes)

ACTIVITY

1. Ask students what they know about the Punjabi community in British Columbia and their culture. Explain to students that they will watch a selection of videos of Punjabi Canadians talking about their experiences moving to and growing up in British Columbia. The videos will discuss the differences they found between the Punjabi and Canadian culture and how they learned to keep their Punjabi culture and ways of being while adapting to Canada.
2. Watch the videos as a class. After the videos are done have a class discussion on the interviews. Discuss any connections the students find between the interviews or with information they already had on this topic.
3. After the discussions tell students they are to write a newspaper article based on one or more of the interviews they have watched. Make sure students understand that they must ground their newspaper articles in evidence presented in the videos. (If there is no time in class, this activity may work as a homework assignment).
4. If students are having difficulty coming up with ideas for their articles, provide them with the topic starters given below.

CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Ask students to reflect on their own immigration stories in their homes or communities. How are their experiences similar to those shared in the interviews?
- How did the interviewee's experiences differ from other immigrant experiences? In what ways were their experiences similar?
- Write a newspaper article about Ms. Seetal Dhillon's family and her family's store
- Discuss the struggles Punjabi immigrants faced adapting to Canada
- How does the Punjabi experience of immigration compare to people of other nations' experience immigrating to Canada that you may know of?

ONLINE RESOURCES

<http://www.sikhs.org/100th/> - This website celebrates the 100 years of Sikhs in Canada (1897-1997), and gives a detailed history of their experience.

<http://explorAsian.org/education/sikh-canadian-history/> - A timeline outlining significant moments in Sikh-Canadian history from 1897 to 1997.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/sikhism/> - A detailed summary of Sikh's immigration and adaptation to Canada.

<http://canadiansikhheritage.ca/> - A site dedicated to the National Historic Site Gur Sikh Temple, Abbotsford BC.

<http://komagatamarujourney.ca/> - This website gives a history of the Komagata Maru Incident.

BOOKS

Hickman, Pamela. *Righting Canada's Wrongs: The Komagata Maru and Canada's Anti-Indian Immigration Policies in the Twentieth Century*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd, 2014.

Nayar, Kamala Elizabeth. *The Punjabis in British Columbia: Location, Labour, First Nations, and Multiculturalism*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012.