

The Punjabi Experience in British Columbia

Lesson Plan – Elementary

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Rationale:

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 pathway, *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.

Curriculum Connections:

Grade 2– 6 Social Studies

Curricular Competencies: Ask questions, corroborate inferences, and draw conclusions about the content and origins of a variety of sources

Grade 2 Social Studies

Big Ideas: Canada is made up of many diverse regions and communities

Content: Diverse characteristics of communities and cultures in Canada and around the world

Grade 3 Social Studies

Content: Aspects of life shared by and common to peoples and cultures

Grade 4 Social Studies

Big Ideas: The pursuit of valuable natural resources has played a key role in changing the land, people, and communities of Canada.

Content: The history of the local community

Grade 5 Social Studies

Big Ideas: Canada's policies and treatment of minority peoples have negative and positive legacies; Natural resources continue to shape the economy and identity of different regions of Canada; Immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity.

Curricular Competencies: Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, and developments

Content: The changing nature of Canadian immigration over time; resources and economic development in different regions of Canada

Grade 6 Social Studies

Content: The urbanization and migration of people

Grade 7 Social Studies

Curricular Competencies: Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments at particular times and places

Grade 8 Social Studies

Curricular Competencies: Identify what the creators of accounts, narratives, maps, or texts have determined is significant

Lesson Activities

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 succeeded in maintaining their Punjabi culture and ways of being while adapting to living in Canada.
2. Divide the class into smaller groups. Assign each group a different interviewee to focus on while watching the videos. Explain that during the videos each group must focus on how their person adapted to/felt about life in Canada and that they will present a role-play on this person's life. Educators can choose to have students view the video as a class on a digital projector or individually at their own computer (which could allow students to pause the video and rewind for clarification and all view their individual interviews at once).
3. After viewing the videos, give the students 15 minutes to prepare their role-plays. Before beginning, ensure students understand they must base their role-plays in evidence presented in the videos.

4. After having time to prepare, have students share their role-plays to the class. When the presentations are finished, prompt these discussion questions.

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?
- What struggles did Punjabi immigrants face adapting to Canada?
- How does the Punjabi experience of immigration compare to people of nations' experience immigrating to Canada that you may know of?
- Why might food have been an important aspect to the Punjabi experience of immigration?

Fully immerse yourself in the Royal BC Museum's Learning Portal by making a [playlist!](#)

Online resources

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

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sikhism> – A detailed summary of Sikh immigration and adaptation to Canada.

www.canadiansikhheritage.ca/ – A site dedicated to the National Historic Site Gur Sikh Temple, Abbotsford BC.

www.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.