

# The Punjabi Experience in British Columbia

## *Lesson Plan – Secondary*

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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 9 Social Studies**

*Social Studies Content:* Global demographic shifts, including patterns of migration and population growth; local, regional, and global conflicts; discriminatory policies, attitudes, and historical wrongs

#### **Grade 10 Social Studies**

*Big Ideas:* Global and regional conflicts have been a powerful force in shaping our contemporary world and identities; Historical and contemporary injustices challenge the narrative and identity of Canada as an inclusive, multicultural society.

*Content:* Canadian identities; discriminatory policies and injustices in Canada and the world

#### **Grade 9–10 Social Studies**

*Curricular Competencies:* Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their historical significance at particular times and places, and from group to group; Assess the justification for competing historical accounts after investigating points of contention, reliability of sources, and adequacy of evidence

## **Grade 12 Human Geography**

*Big Ideas:* Analyzing data from a variety of sources allows us to better understand our globally connected world.

*Curricular Competencies:* Assess the significance of places by identifying the physical and/or human features that characterize them (sense of place); assess a variety of interpretations of geographic evidence after investigating different perspectives, reliability of sources, and adequacy of evidence

*Content:* Relationships between cultural traits, use of physical space, and impacts on the environment; factors behind increased urbanization and its influence on societies and environments

## **Grade 12 Comparative Culture**

*Big Ideas:* Understanding the diversity and complexity of cultural expressions in one culture enhances our understanding of other cultures; Interactions between belief systems, social organization, and languages influence artistic expressions of culture.

*Curricular Competencies:* Assess and compare the significance of cultural expressions at particular times and places; Evaluate inferences about the content, origins, purposes, context, reliability, and usefulness of multiple sources from the past and present

*Content:* Elements of culture and cultural expression; role of value systems and belief systems in the development of cultures; interactions and exchanges between cultures

## **Grade 9–12 English Language Arts**

*Estimated time required:* 40-45 minutes

### **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 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?

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

## 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.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/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.