

May 7, 2014

### Royal BC Museum Marks Centennial Anniversary of the *Komagata Maru*

Victoria, BC — One hundred years ago, the Japanese steamship *Komagata Maru* set sail from Punjab, India, and arrived in Vancouver with 376 passengers on board, sparking a series of events that continues to leave a mark on Canada.

The passengers, mostly Sikh migrants but also comprising Hindus and Muslims, were hoping to join their fellow British subjects in Canada. Instead, they were met with hostile immigration officials and refused permission to disembark. Held for **two months in Vancouver's** harbour, only 24 were permitted to land. The rest were forced to return to India. Once there, they encountered hostile British colonial authorities who suspected them to be seditious. Many were shot and killed while others were imprisoned.

On the centennial anniversary of the *Komagata Maru* episode, the Royal BC Museum, in partnership with the University of Victoria, is hosting a series of events to discuss and reflect upon the lessons learned.

"A century later, the *Komagata Maru* episode marks an unfortunate period in Canadian history," says Kim Gough, the Royal BC Museum's Adult Learning Team Lead, Visitor Engagement & Experience. "**It's important that we** bring awareness to the incident, and remember and reflect upon **our nation's past to prevent similar injustices from unfolding in the future.**"

On Friday, May 16, author and poet Tariq Malik will be discussing the legacy and politics of skin colour among the colonized populations, the inherent conflict of adopted homelands and how the anti-colonial insurgencies and resurgences are connected to Indigenous politics in Canada. Malik will conclude his lecture with an audio-visual version of his poem, *Hugging the Shore*. Registration online at [www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca](http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca) or at the Royal BC Museum box office is required for this free event.

On Friday, May 23 at the Vic Theatre, the Royal BC Museum is hosting a Swap Café discussion following the screening the Ali Kazimi documentary *Continuous Journey*. The film documents the arrival of the *Komagata Maru*, **the enforcement of Canada's little-known** immigration policy, the Continuous Journey clause, and the dire consequences that resulted from forcing **the ship's return** to India. Tickets are \$5 for the discussion and are available online or by cash only at the door. Royal BC Museum members receive a 10 per cent discount.

On May 15 and 16, the University of Victoria is hosting a related academic workshop, *Charting Imperial Itineraries: 1914-2014, Unmooring the Komagata Maru*. Rita Kaur Dhamoon, assistant professor in the department of political science at UVic, is speaking at the workshop on events in 1914 and today that exemplify colonial encounters of difference.

"I will explore how colonialism in the past is related to racism and colonialism today, and how relationships between South Asians and other marginalized peoples, including Indigenous peoples, have been shaped by Canadian authorities," says Dhamoon. To register for the workshop, contact Dr. Dhamoon at 250-721-6492 or [dhamoonr@uvic.ca](mailto:dhamoonr@uvic.ca). For more info, visit [www.chartingimperialitineraries.ca](http://www.chartingimperialitineraries.ca).

For more information about Tariq Malik's lecture at the Royal BC Museum or the SWAP Café event at the Vic Theatre, visit [www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca](http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca) or call 1-250-356-7226.

### **About the Royal BC Museum**

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Looking to the future, by 2017 the Royal BC Museum will be a refreshed, modern museum, extending its reach far beyond its two-hectare campus in Victoria as a world-class cultural venue and repository of digital treasures.

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