

Royal BC Museum and Archives
in partnership with
The Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley
Report of a Community Consultation for The Punjabi Legacy Initiative
Hosted by The Kelowna Museums Society
Kelowna, BC, October 15, 2016

This was one of eight community consultations held throughout the province by the [Royal BC Museum and Archives](#) in partnership with the [Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies](#) (CICS) at the University of the Fraser Valley and the [Punjabi Intercultural History Advisory Committee](#). Consultations sought input from the Punjabi community, a pioneer group that has had a significant impact on the province's cultural, economic and social history.

The consultations were coordinated by the two partnering institutions and the local hosts, with guidance and support from the BC Punjabi Intercultural History Advisory Committee, and many committee facilitators and note-takers.

Each group was asked the same three questions, as the first step in creating a provincial Punjabi legacy project that preserves and shares community history.

On November 5, 2016, the [Kelowna Museums Society](#) hosted a BC Punjabi Legacy Project consultation at the Laurel Packinghouse in Kelowna, where the Punjabi-Canadian communities have long settled and established vibrant intercultural lives. The following is a summary of discussions:

1 – What significant stories/events best convey the Punjabi legacy in BC?

- Participants discussed some broad themes they wished to see conveyed:
 - the gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) in Kelowna as a sacred space that brought families together, including how the original gurdwara was later turned into a seniors centre with a newer gurdwara being built across the street,
 - the hardworking spirit of the pioneers, whether they were entrepreneurs, farmers, mill workers, working in the vegetable gardens, orchards, or onion farms, or even Punjabi students in the schools,
 - bringing communities together in the future and
 - significant 'firsts' in the community, including the first South Asian nurse, the first Olympic medal, the first Indo-Canadian owned winery in 1999 (Mt. Boucherie), the first Punjabi mayor (Mr. Basran), the first Punjabi women who learned to drive.

2 – What artifacts/information are important to preserve for today and for future generations?

- Among the artifacts mentioned by participants was a famous cowboy hat reputedly worn by a pioneer (Mr. Basran).
- Others mentioned having classroom school pictures or the famous Punjabi-owned vineyards themselves (e.g., Mount Boucherie) or the largest vineyard in Canada being owned by a Punjabi family (Geeta family).

3 – How might we create a legacy project to make Punjabi history in BC available to all British Columbians?

- Participants wished to reiterate that the stories of Punjabis in the Okanagan are very different from other regional/metropolitan stories. They suggested the following:
 - showcasing families through ten-minute video clips of interviews, or as a part of shorter videos that can be watched and shared; working on this with the Kelowna public archives, based on the Kelowna pioneer project,
 - hand-held products, such as coffee table books, or magazine-style outputs that highlight culture, problems, struggles and solutions and
 - other responses reflected current social media trends, such as Snapchat history sound bites.
- Others suggested the need for the younger generations to participate in the process of creating exhibits specifically catering to them.