

April 27, 2021

Royal BC Museum Showcases History Collection to Celebrate Sikh Heritage Month

VICTORIA, BC—To celebrate Sikh Heritage Month, the Royal BC Museum has updated its online collection, [100 Objects of Interest](#), with a historic *tamba* dining set, used by Indar Singh Gill during his trans-Pacific voyage to BC in 1927.

This dining set, a kind rarely found today, allows us to better understand the everyday lives of people embarking on the first major wave of migration from Punjab to Canada in the early 1900s. Sikh migrants on sea voyages across the Pacific commonly travelled with this type of dining set because of caste and class sensibilities.

“When you consider the significant and positive impact of Sikh communities in building BC and Canada, it’s important to also recognize the challenges these communities overcame and their resilience,” says Dr. Tzu-I Chung, Royal BC Museum curator of history. “This particular dining set is a testimony to settler families’ multi-generational journey from Punjab to Canada, and their enduring legacy. We are deeply thankful to the Gill family and the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley (SASI at UFV) for making its preservation possible.”

Indar Singh Gill’s father, Naranjan Singh Gill, was part of the first major wave of migration from Punjab to Canada in 1906. His wife and children joined him in the 1930s in Mission, BC. Indar’s son, Kalvan Gill, became an entrepreneur and his daughter, Kuldip Gill, an English professor.

“Preservation of a rare historical artifact that reflects Punjabi lives in BC in the early 1900’s is critically important,” says Dr. Satwinder Bains, director of SASI at UFV. “Many immigrant communities experienced that era as racially volatile, socially fragile and fraught with imminent threats of expulsion, so these items strengthen our resolve to recollect our past so that future generations may understand their own particular histories with the richness that they deserve.”



The addition of the set to 100 Objects of Interest supports the 2021 theme for [Sikh Heritage Month in BC](#), Finding Sehaj: A Journey to Peace and Tranquility.

Other Sikh Heritage Month programs at the Royal BC Museum include a [digital panel discussion](#) (on Tuesday, April 27) about the ongoing farmers protest in India and why it's important here in BC.

The Royal BC Museum is indebted to SASI at UFV for their expertise and leadership partnering on the [Punjabi Canadian Legacy Project](#) and the [South Asian Canadian Legacy Project](#); and to Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra, Jindi Singh and Dupinder Kaur Saran for adding their voices to the upcoming digital panel, [Farmers' Protest and Why it Matters: A Conversation as part of Sikh Heritage Month](#).

Images of, and details about, the historic *tamba* dining set, and other objects of interest selected by Royal BC Museum curators, archivists and collections managers, are featured at royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/100/.

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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. Located in Victoria on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations), we are a hub of community connections in BC—onsite, offsite and online—taking pride in our collective histories.

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