

"Sikh Pioneers in Canada"

On Saturday, November 24, we celebrated our student artists' accomplishments. Lead by Manjit Singh Jee, students completed 12 paintings that reflected the theme "Sikh Pioneers in Canada". Students, parents, grandparents, families, and friends came out to the Kariton Art Gallery opening reception to view the final product of the artists' hard work. Everyone enjoyed the wonderful evening viewing the exhibit, hanging out, and eating food. The paintings will be posted on our website very shortly! Thank you for a great turnout! The art will be exhibited until December 18, 2018. Visit the Art Gallery between Tuesday and Saturday from 11:00 am - 4:00 pm! Scroll down to see below our students' amazing work:



ARTIST: ANGAD SINGH DHILLON

PAINTING: 1900s RAIL ROAD WORKERS

Almost all the men who arrived in British Columbia worked in such labor industries including forestry, fishing and railway. Because the Canadian government was preoccupied with restricting Chinese and Japanese immigration at the time, these South Asians were quite easily able to find such work. On average, these men earned from \$1 to \$1.25 a day, which was less than the pay received by Caucasian workers.

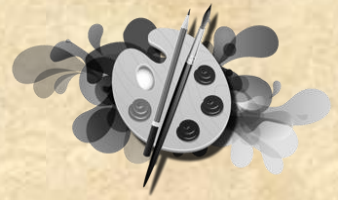


**GURMAT CENTER
ARTWORKS**

Gurmat Center Artworks

presents...

"Sikh Pioneers in Canada"



ARTIST: HARVEEN KAUR BRAR

PAINTING: KOMAGATA MARU

The Komagata Maru was a Japanese steamship, which carried 376 passengers; 340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims, and 12 Hindus. The chartered ship sailed from one corner of the British Empire, Hong Kong, to the furthest corner of the British Empire, Vancouver, Canada. Gurdit Singh, chief spokesperson for the passengers, initiated an immigration to Canada following the criteria of the Continuous Passage Act. Unfortunately, this immigration was brought to a halt when the Canadian Government denied the ship entry into Coal Harbor.

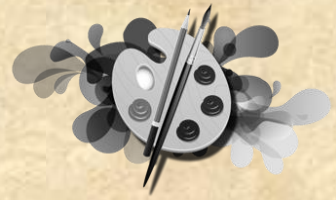


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ARTIST: SUKHVEER SINGH BUTTAR

PAINTING: MEVA SINGH

Bhai Mewa Singh, Sikh activist, held inspector Hopkinson responsible for the murder of the two Sikhs in the Gurdwara because the killer was working as a mole for Mr. Hopkinson. Inspector Hopkinson was to appear in court on October 21, 1914 to testify in favour of the killer. On that morning, Singh walked up to the third-floor rotunda and killed Hopkinson with four shots from his revolver. He then handed over his weapon to the authorities and took full responsibility for his act, knowing he would receive capital punishment. He was willing to face death with courage and had no regret for his action.

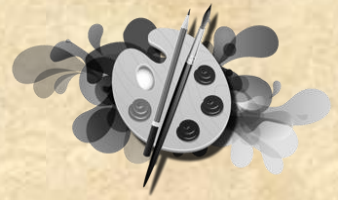


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ARTIST: GURPREET SINGH KANG

PAINTING: MOHINDER KAUR

Mohinder Kaur Thandi migrated to Abbotsford, BC with her husband Sunder Singh Thandi in the early 1940's after their marriage in India in 1943. At the onset, Mrs. Thandi's story is unlike that of other pioneer Sikh women of the time. Because from the get-go, Mrs. Thandi took an active interest in two male dominated and patriarchal areas of the time: the family business and the Gurudwara. She was a Sikh pioneer feminist of her time.

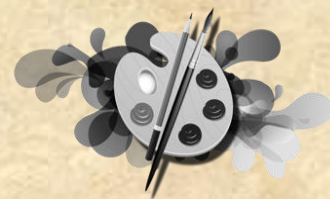


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ARTIST: TARANDEEP KAUR SIDHU

PAINTING: SANT TEJA SINGH

Sant Teja Singh is the first ambassador of Sikhism to the Western Hemisphere and founder of the first Sikh Gurdwaras in Canada, the US and UK. Sant Teja Singh attended Cambridge, Columbia and Harvard Universities. He had a long activist history with Sikhs in British Columbia and California, where he served as a priest and advocate for human rights. His life will continue to serve as beacon of light to all those interested in uplift and service of humanity without any distinction of caste, creed, race or color.

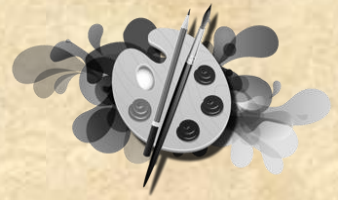


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ARTIST: SUKHVEER SINGH BUTTAR

PAINTING: HARDIAL SINGH

Hardial Singh was the first Sikh born in Canada on August 28, 1912 in Vancouver, BC. Hardial Singh lived with his father, Balwant Singh, and mother, Kartar Kaur. Balwant Singh Atwal was the first member of the family to arrive in Canada around 1906-07. He hailed from the village of Khurdpur, district Jalandhar. After living in Canada for some years, Balwant Singh sponsored the rest of his family: Kartar Kaur and his two daughters Udham Kaur and Naranjan Kaur, who arrived around 1912. The family was therefore already settled in Vancouver at the time Hardial Singh was born. Balwant Singh supported the family and was the first Granthi (Sikh Minister) of the Gurdwara on 2nd avenue.

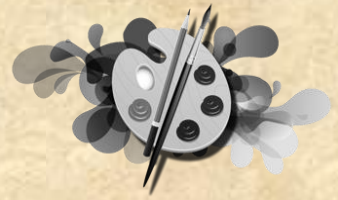


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ARTIST: HARVEEN KAUR BRAR

PAINTING: MAYO LUMBER

In 1906, Mayo Singh Manhas arrived in Canada and started work as a stacker in Abbotsford. He later moved to Vancouver Island and acquired the defunct Island Lumber Co. located in Cowichan Valley. It was in this valley that he later established the village of Paldi where logging operations began and work opportunities were created for South Asian men.

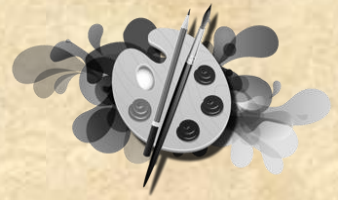


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ARTIST: HARVEEN KAUR BRAR

PAINTING: HASTINGS MILL

Hastings Mill was a sawmill on the south shore of Burrard Inlet and was the first commercial operation around which the settlement, that would become Vancouver, developed in British Columbia, Canada. The workforce at Hastings Mill was a culturally diverse group that included local natives, Sikhs, South Asian's and sailors from all over the world who jumped ship in Burrard Inlet. The Mill's manager, RH Alexander, lost the first Vancouver mayoral contest in part because he was trying to break a strike of white mill workers with Chinese laborer's, and experienced the backlash at ballot box.

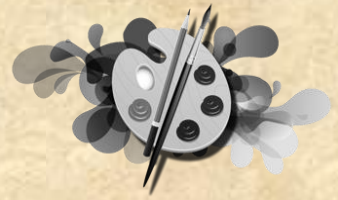


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ARTIST: PRABHNOOR KAUR DHALIWAL

PAINTING: BHAG SINGH

Bhag Singh came to Canada in 1906. He became secretary of the Gurudwara Management Committee in Vancouver in October 1908. Bhag Singh campaigned to allow Indian immigrants to bring their families to Canada. Bhag Singh was a member of the Shore Committee at the time of the Komagata Maru incident and took over the charter of the ship from Gurdit Singh. He advocated on behalf of the 376 passengers aboard the Komagata Maru. On September 5, 1914, Bhag Singh and Battan Singh were killed in a shooting by Bela Singh, (Inspector Hopkinson's Spy) inside Khalsa Diwan Society.

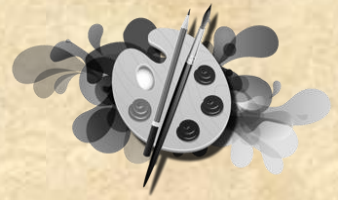


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ARTIST: PRABHNOOR KAUR DHALIWAL

PAINTING: 1897 SOLDIERS AND HILL CREST SIKH TEMPLE

1897 Soldiers

The first people from India to migrate to British Columbia were Sikhs from Northern India (mainly from Punjab). These men were actually on an official trip as part of the Indian army regiments who were travelling through Canada in commemoration of Queen Victoria of England's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Even in terms of the hospitality and reception they received, the larger British Columbian community tended to treat the Punjabi soldiers with respect, as the local papers exclaimed "Turbaned Men Excite Interest: Awe-inspiring men from India held the crowds."

Hill Crest Sikh Temple

The simple rectangular, gable roofed building of the Sikh temple is similar to majority of the buildings present in the frontier towns of Canada. The interior is a reflection of Sikh traditions and religious beliefs. The first floor of the temple hosts Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (Sikh Holy Scripture), while the ground floor hosts the communal Langar (vegetarian meal).

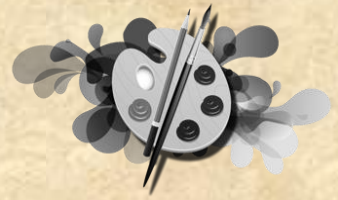


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ARTIST: JASREET KAUR BAJWA

PAINTING: KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY

The Khalsa Diwan Society is the very first pioneer Sikh establishment in British Columbia and the oldest religious society in North America. It has a key historical role in Sikh migration to BC, helping Sikhs build their community and lives. It was first established on July 22, 1906 and officially registered on March 13, 1909. After its inauguration, the Khalsa Diwan Society maintained its presence in Vancouver and expanded to places such as Abbotsford. This society has assisted in raising Sikhism related issues and getting recognition for Sikhs in Canada.