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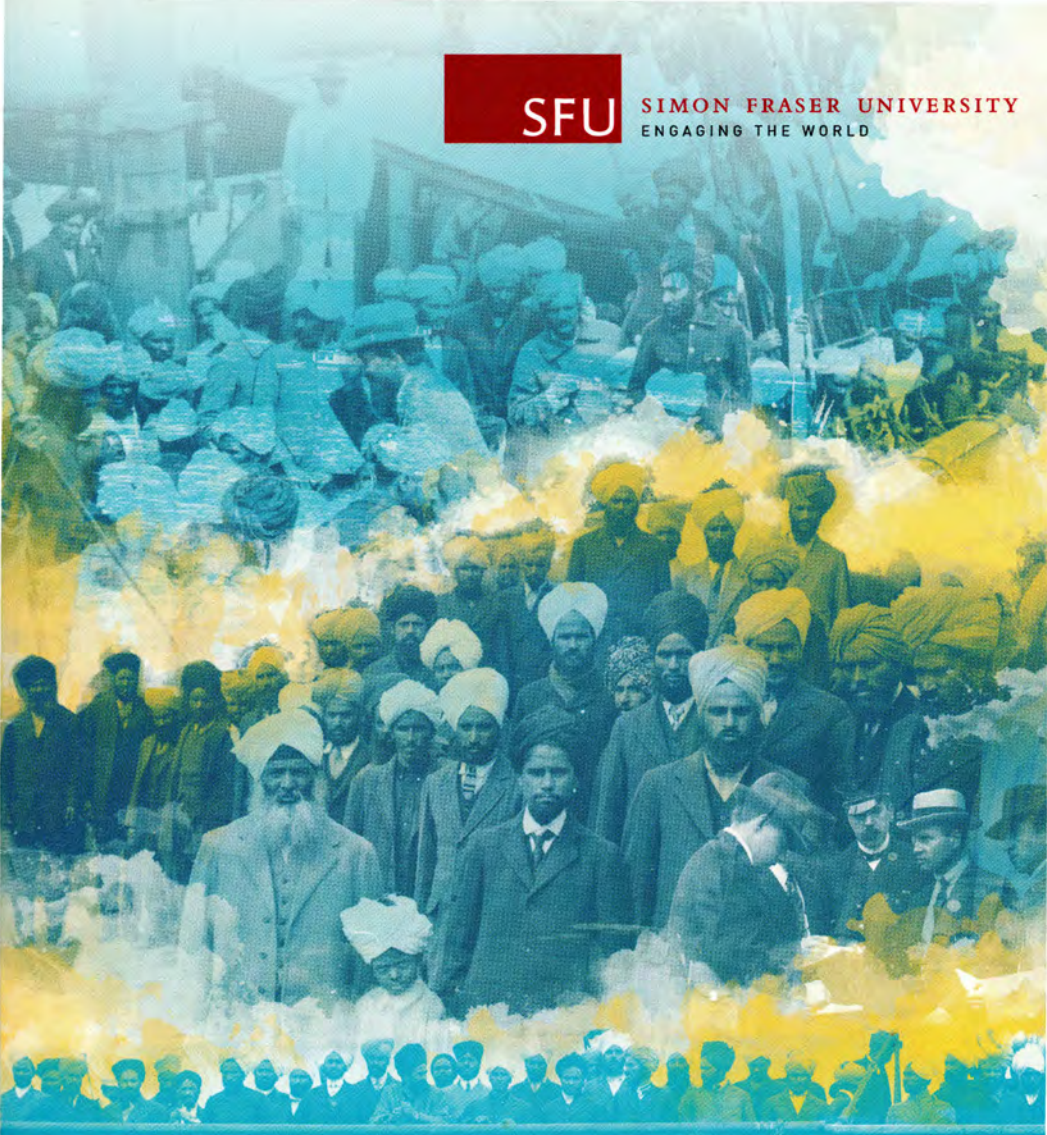
ENGAGING THE WORLD



1914 — KOMAGATA MARU 2014

MAY 23, 2014
SFU Harbour Centre

KOMAGATA MARU - 100TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

MESSAGE FROM THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Welcome to the Komagata Maru 100th Anniversary Commemoration event hosted by Simon Fraser University.

The story of the Komagata Maru resonates beyond 1914. It has connections to freedom movements in India and to the struggle for the right to vote for South Asians in Canada. It reminds us of the adversity faced and the contributions made by the Indo-Canadian community in building a country that has come to pride itself on its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character.

It also holds important lessons for the present. As philosopher George Santayana famously said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." In commemorating the Komagata Maru incident, we not only recall past wrongs, we also renew our commitment to celebrating diversity and protecting human rights.

Today is a day for remembrance, dialogue and recognition. In that spirit, I hope you leave this morning's events both with a deeper appreciation of the past and with a renewed commitment to ensuring a just future.

Andrew Petter

MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE JASON KENNEY

Minister for Multiculturalism | Ministre du Multiculturalisme

Greetings from the Honourable Jason Kenney, PC, MP

I am pleased to extend my greetings to all those attending the 100th Anniversary commemoration of Vancouver's Komagata Maru incident, hosted by Simon Fraser University in partnership with numerous local community organizations.

This event commemorates a significant and tragic event in our nation's history - the *Komagata Maru* incident. The *Komagata Maru* steamed into Vancouver in May 1914. Its passengers, mostly Sikhs from Punjab, India, challenged Canada's Continuous Journey clause, which was put in place in part to limit immigration from non-European countries. After two months under difficult conditions, the ship and most of its passengers were forced to return to India where, in a subsequent clash with British soldiers, 19 passengers died.

The Government of Canada is pleased to actively support many events and tributes to commemorate the centenary of this incident, including by making it a central element of this year's Asian Heritage Month activities. This included the launch of a commemorative stamp by Canada Post, with Prime Minister Stephen Harper's support. We are also highlighting the many community projects funded under CIC's Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP), such as the impressive monument at Burrard Inlet and the corresponding museum.

As Minister for Multiculturalism, I would like to offer my congratulations to the organizers of this commemorative event, and I encourage all Canadians to attend and learn more about this tragic chapter in our nation's history, and about the countless contributions made by South Asian newcomers to Canada since then.

Best wishes for a successful event.

Sincerely,

The Hon. Jason Kenney, PC, MP
Minister of Employment and Social Development and
Minister for Multiculturalism

Canada

MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE CHRISTY CLARK

BRITISH
COLUMBIA

A Message from Premier Christy Clark

On behalf of the people and province of British Columbia, it is my pleasure to join with Simon Fraser University in recognition of the 100th Anniversary of the departure of the Komagata Maru from Vancouver in 1914.

The passengers on board the Komagata Maru came to our province with a dream of a better life, but they weren't given that opportunity.

On May 23, 2008, our Legislative Assembly passed a Motion about the Komagata Maru:

> *Be it resolved that this Legislature apologizes for the events of May 23, 1914, when 376 passengers of the Komagata Maru, stationed off Vancouver harbour, were denied entry by Canada. The House deeply regrets that the passengers, who sought refuge in our country and our province, were turned away without benefit of the fair and impartial treatment befitting a society where people of all cultures are welcomed and accepted.*

This terrible act of racism is an important reminder to us all. We must value, respect and welcome all immigrants and refugees who seek to build their lives here in British Columbia. They better our province and communities, enrich our culture, and strengthen our economy.

We have learned a lot over the last century. But we must never forget this important lesson.

Sincerely,

Christy Clark
Premier

MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE TERESA WAT

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Message from

The Honourable Teresa Wat

Minister of International Trade and Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism

May 23, 2014

One hundred years ago today a ship named the Komagata Maru entered Vancouver's Burrard Inlet carrying 376 passengers from India who had hopes for a new life in Canada. After that long journey they were turned away and not allowed to enter the country. What made this event more tragic was that, after their forced repatriation and upon arrival back to India, twenty individuals were killed.

Today this treatment would be unimaginable. We, as a province and as a nation, embrace people from all cultures as new Canadians and immigrants to British Columbia. The people who have come here from South Asia have made a tremendous contribution to Canada and to this province. The cultural diversity that they bring has enriched our experiences as a society and as a nation.

The Komagata Maru incident was a real black mark in the history of Canada and highlights the discriminatory government policies of the time. In 2008, the Government of British Columbia made a formal apology to the South Asian community and to the families of the victims of this incident.

British Columbia thrives on diversity. Our wide variety of cultures contribute to the overall economic health and quality of life in our communities. The B.C. Government has a goal to promote multiculturalism and eliminate racism in British Columbia. We want to celebrate our differences – by helping to create safer, more welcoming communities that support diversity and reject discrimination.

I want to thank the members of the community who have come here today to commemorate this occasion and to acknowledge the past wrongs that have taken place in our province.

Sincerely,

Teresa Wat

Teresa Wat
Minister

Ministry of International Trade and Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism

Office of the Minister

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KOMAGATA MARU EPISODE

On May 23rd, 1914, the Komagata Maru entered Burrard Inlet carrying 376 passengers looking forward to starting their lives in Canada. The ship and those on board arrived despite the recent introduction of Canada's discriminatory Continuous Passage Regulation, a law that required immigrants to Canada to arrive by a single, direct journey from their country of origin. Because no direct route between the Dominion of Canada and British India existed, this policy was a roundabout means to exclude Indian immigration and preserve – in the words of a popular song of the time – "White Canada forever."

Like the Canadians on shore, all Komagata Maru passengers were subjects of the British Empire and many had fought for Britain, upholding the very freedoms they now desired. Upon arrival, the passengers were immediately detained by Canadian immigration authorities determined to keep the ship at anchor. Vancouver's Burrard Inlet became the flashpoint for a standoff that gained international attention.

Their inability to land caused hardship for the passengers, who soon lacked food and water. The passengers were also denied access to medical attention, communication with their family and proper legal counsel. Their challenge to Canada's right to deny their landing was delayed and eventually denied. On July 23, 1914, the Komagata Maru passengers were forced to leave Canada.

The history of this voyage of the Komagata Maru and its passengers has never been forgotten. The resistance of the passengers and their commitment to the idea of equality promised in a democratic country has continued to be inspiring. It has been referenced in freedom movements around the world. The Komagata Maru is not just a story of what happened in 1914. It is one chapter in a long struggle to create a Canada that resists racism. The story of the Komagata Maru is a story that all Canadians can relate to today.

KOMAGATA MARU EPISODE

Leonard Frank, Vancouver Public Library No. 6226

Vancouver Public Library No. 6225B

James L. Quiney, City of Vancouver Archives CVA 7-126

Vancouver Public Library No. 6228

MEDIA CONFERENCE

Media Preview

Simon Fraser University Library • Progressive Intercultural Community Services • Khalsa Diwan Society • Museum of Vancouver • Surrey Art Gallery • Surrey Museum • Surrey Public Libraries • Vancouver Maritime Museum

Aboriginal Welcome

Elder Margaret, Tsleil-Waututh Nation

Opening Remarks

Andrew Petter, President and Vice-Chancellor
Simon Fraser University

Komagata Maru Video

Special Guest Remarks

Honourable Tim Uppal, PC, MP, Minister of State (Multiculturalism)
Citizenship and Immigration
Government of Canada

Honourable Christy Clark, MLA
Premier of British Columbia
(Video Message)

Honourable Amrik Virk, MLA
Minister for Advanced Education
Government of British Columbia

Announcement

Amarjit Singh Brar and family

Closing Remarks

Media Q&A

Reception and Entertainment

Sticks and Stones, Intercultural Percussion Group

PANEL DISCUSSION

Opening Remarks

Naveen Girn
Project Manager, Komagata Maru 1914-2014 Generations, Geographies and Echoes

Komagata Maru Video

Retrospective Speaker

Hugh Johnston
SFU Professor Emeritus
Author, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar*

Panel Discussion

Satwinder Kaur Bains
Director, Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies, University of the Fraser Valley

Kanwal Singh Neel
Retired SFU Associate Director in Professional Programs, Faculty of Education

Kalwant Singh Nadeem Parmar
Writer and Poet

Milan Singh
SFU Phd Candidate, Faculty of Communications, Arts and Technology

Moderator: Naveen Girn

Moment of Silence

Special Guest Speaker

Ali Kazimi
Associate Professor, York University and Filmmaker, *Continuous Journey*

Closing Remarks

Naveen Girn

Group Procession to Khalsa Diwan Society Memorial Event

Harbour Green Park

SPEAKERS

SATWINDER KAUR BAINS

Satwinder Kaur Bains is the Director of the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley. She is also an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts, Canada India Studies. Her current research interests include: cross-cultural curriculum implementation; migration and global movements; critical race studies; gender politics and feminism; diaspora studies, Sikhism and the politics of identity.

She has more than 30 years of experience in anti-racism work in the community as well as within the academy. Her professional background has included serving as diversity educator, community developer and community activist in the areas of women's rights, youth development, race and anti-racism and immigrant settlement integration. Satwinder currently serves on a number of local, national and international academic and legislative boards.

NAVEEN GIRN

Naveen Girn is a cultural researcher and community engagement specialist whose interests center on Vancouver's South Asian community, intercultural history and curation. Naveen is currently Project Manager for the Komagata Maru 1914-2014: Generations, Geographies and Echoes Project that brings together eight institutions across Metro Vancouver to collaboratively commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Komagata Maru. He curated exhibitions on the Komagata Maru at the Museum of Vancouver (Unmoored: Vancouver's Voyage of the Komagata Maru) and Surrey Museum (Echoes of the Komagata Maru) and was co-curator for Bhangra.me: Vancouver's Bhangra Story, which received an Award for Excellence from the Canadian Museum Association. As principal at Digital Handloom, Naveen leads a community storytelling practice that engages with and shares untold community stories.

SPEAKERS

HUGH JOHNSTON

Hugh Johnston received his under-graduate and graduate training as an historian at University of Toronto, University of Western Ontario, and Kings College, London, England. He spent his academic career at Simon Fraser University where he is now a Professor Emeritus. Currently, he also serves as Vice-President Academic at Alexander College. In the past he had a long association with the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, which promotes academic exchanges between Canada and India.

Johnston's 1979 publication, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar*, by Oxford University Press, brought the attention of the scholarly community to this previously neglected incident in Canadian history. He has this spring published with UBC Press a thoroughly revised and considerably expanded edition of this book, in which he takes a fresh look at the incident with the benefit of new material and an up-to-date perspective.

ALI KAZIMI

Ali Kazimi is an award-winning filmmaker, critically acclaimed author, and visual artist whose work deals with race, social justice, migration, history, and memory. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Film, York University where he has been teaching since 2006.

During the course of a career that has spanned more than two decades, Kazimi's films have received over thirty national and international honours and awards, been screened in dozens of festivals, and broadcast on many networks including CBC, TVO, PBS (US) and Channel 4 (UK). Kazimi has dealt with the history of early South Asian migration in three films: *Passage from India* ('98), *Continuous Journey* ('04), and *Rex versus Singh* ('08).

In 2012, Kazimi authored the nationally acclaimed book *Undesirables: White Canada and the Komagata Maru – An Illustrated History* (Douglas & McIntyre). The book was a finalist for both the 2012 City of Vancouver Book Award, and the 2013 Roderick Haig-Brown Regional Prize (one of the BC Book Prizes).

SPEAKERS

KANWAL SINGH NEEL

Kanwal Singh Neel is a career educator and a tireless volunteer in the community fulfilling many different roles. He is currently one of the Project Coordinators for the Friends of Simon Tutoring Project at Simon Fraser University. For the past forty years he has volunteered as a technical official in Track and Field and Race Walking, from local to international events. Most recently he has been on the Jury of Appeal for the Vancouver Sun Run and the BMO Marathon.

Neel was the Coordinator for the 75th Anniversary of the Komagata Maru Incident, and served as an advisor to the Komagata Maru: Continuing the Journey website project, with the SFU Library. He continues to be a mentor to new immigrants to Canada. He has always believed that education is a key element in fostering social responsibility, which breaks racial and cultural barriers.

KALWANT SINGH NADEEM PARMAR

Kalwant Singh Nadeem Parmar is a writer and poet with a working knowledge of five languages: Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, English and Persian. In addition to engineering, Mr. Parmar holds degrees in science, arts, teaching and Urdu. Writing since the age of 12, Mr. Parmar's creative endeavors include short stories, one-act plays, novels, and ghazals. He has translated a novel by A. C. Frazera, Atma, about the last Sikh war with the British. His Urdu plays have been performed on Radio Station Jalandhar and his ghazals sung by the late great, Jagjit Singh.

Mr. Parmar's report on the history of the Khalsa Diwan Society highlights its central role in mobilizing the community in their struggle for rights (immigration, vote) and in assisting the Komagata Maru passengers. His creative works and passion for community service have earned him numerous awards, including the 2013 Kendri Lakhari Sabha of North America, Surrey, BC.

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Excerpts Regarding the Komagata Maru Episode from the Diary of Arjan Singh (Chand) Brar

Donated to SFU Library in 2014

28-11-1913	39 men came from Homeland (India) by ship. After a long struggle with immigration, 35 men were allowed to disembark. Four men were not allowed due to sickness.
18-5-1914	Raja Singh was sent by boat to anchor Komagata Maru at Port Alberni dock.
20-5-1914	An attempt was made to go near Komagata Maru by small boat but the Canadian Government did not permit. Following gentlemen went - Bhai Bhag Singh, Balwant Singh, Mitt Singh, Rahim, Babu Harnam Singh, Rattan Singh and Uttam Singh Hans.
23-5-1914	Komagata Maru ship arrived in Vancouver at 11 a.m.
31-5-1914	Lectures were delivered in the Dominion Hall about the ship. Present brethren donated money generously.
13-6-1914	Received a telegram from Komagata Maru company that the installment of chartering charges be paid or return the ship.
20-7-1914	Battleship "Rainbow" along with military soldiers was called to intimidate the Komagata Maru passengers. The passengers were warned that, if they did not take Komagata Maru back, then Komagata Maru along with passengers would be drowned by hitting with a cannonball.
21-7-1914	Mohammad Akbar, Kartar Singh Chand, Gurdit Singh Bilga, Mitt Singh Pandori, Natha Singh, Rattan Singh, Arjan Singh, Ganga Singh, Uttam Singh Hans, Tara Singh Kauni went inside the Komagata Maru. They then discussed with the lawyer MacNeill who advised that the ship be returned.
22-7-1914	The food supplies were loaded on ship the whole day. After demands for more rations, the military was called in.
23-7-1914	Komagata Maru ship sailed back at four thirty in the morning.

SFU Library, Special Collections and Rare Books, B.C. Postcard Collection, MSC 130-2492

SPEAKERS

MILAN SINGH

Milan Singh is a PhD Candidate in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. Her research project examines public inquiries, family testimonies, and claims of Canadian citizenship in relation to the bombing of Air India Flight 182. In addition, Milan's research interests include the political activity of the Canadian South Asian diaspora, issues related to the Komagata Maru incident, and media representations of marginalised groups. She has presented research on these topics at national and international conferences, and has co-supervised an honours thesis on the Komagata Maru.

Milan was also involved with Simon Fraser University's Komagata Maru project in various capacities, including designing education modules, developing youth profile videos, assisting with interviews, and organizing a research symposium.

City of Vancouver Archives Ch P87

SFU INDIA ADVISORY COUNCIL

In 2006, Simon Fraser University established the SFU India Advisory Council to support the University's strategic initiatives in India and engagement with B.C.'s Indo-Canadian diaspora.

The core objectives of the Council are to advise and guide:

- programming with businesses and government agencies to foster B.C.-India partnerships, economic linkages and the development of market intelligence
- academic opportunities for research, teaching, community service and innovative student and faculty mobility programs in India
- educational and cultural engagements with B.C.'s Indo-Canadian community.

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Wally Oppal
Andrew Petter

Council Members

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Gulzar Cheema
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Philip Steenkamp

THANK YOU

It is through private support that the Simon Fraser University Library can continue as an academic and community hub providing information, ideas and inspiration. We are grateful for the incredible support that the following individuals and organizations have provided for our Komagata Maru – Phase 2 project:

A.S. Bubber & Associates Inc.
Ansatel Communications Inc.
Brook Pooni Associates
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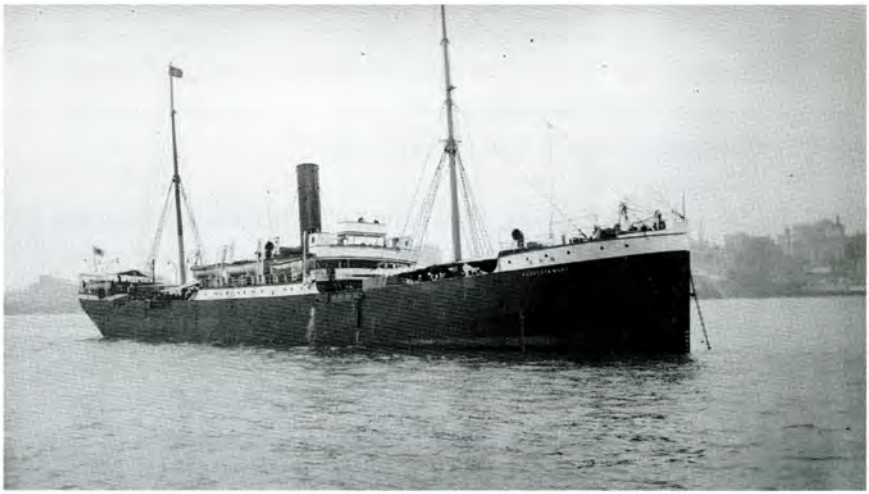
Komagata Maru Heritage Foundation
Jas Sandhu
SFU Community Engagement Initiative



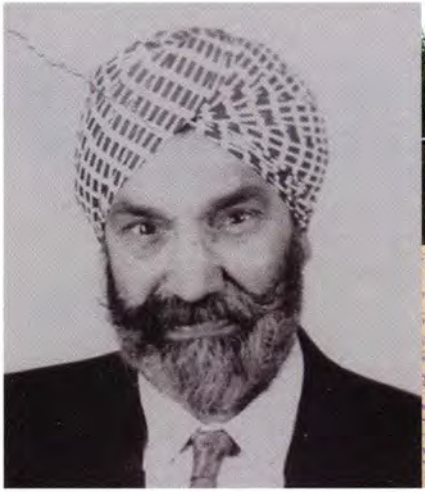
Vancouver Public Library No. 83583

ARJAN SINGH BRAR COLLECTION

In 2014, nearly 100 years after the Komagata Maru episode, Mr. Amarjit Singh Brar and his family donated to Simon Fraser University Library, Special Collections and Rare Books, a suitcase full of his father's documents, scrapbooks, diaries, photographs and other unique items chronicling the history of South Asians in Vancouver from the time of the Komagata Maru. Arjan Singh Brar originally came to Canada in 1926. An active member of the pioneer South Asian Canadian community, he held numerous roles with the Khalsa Diwan Society at Vancouver's first Sikh Temple located at 1866 West 2nd Avenue, and was at the centre of the religious, political, economic and social life of the community.

The heart of this collection is Arjan Singh Brar's diary. Started in the 1920's, it documents the history of the community beginning in 1904 and ending in 1947. Penned with his careful hand, this diary combines a record of the official life of a Temple executive with the chronicles of an astute historian documenting the daily lives of early South Asian immigrants in Vancouver. Included are day to day accounts of the Temple Committee and funds raised for charitable causes, anecdotes about life in Vancouver, and photographs of the historic 2nd Avenue Gurdwara. A significant highlight of the diary is its account of the Komagata Maru episode from a South Asian perspective – recorded chronologically is the community's response to the ship's arrival, including the activities of the Shore Committee, and events leading to the ship's eventual departure. The Library is currently undertaking the translation of the diary into English.

ARJAN SINGH BRAR COLLECTION



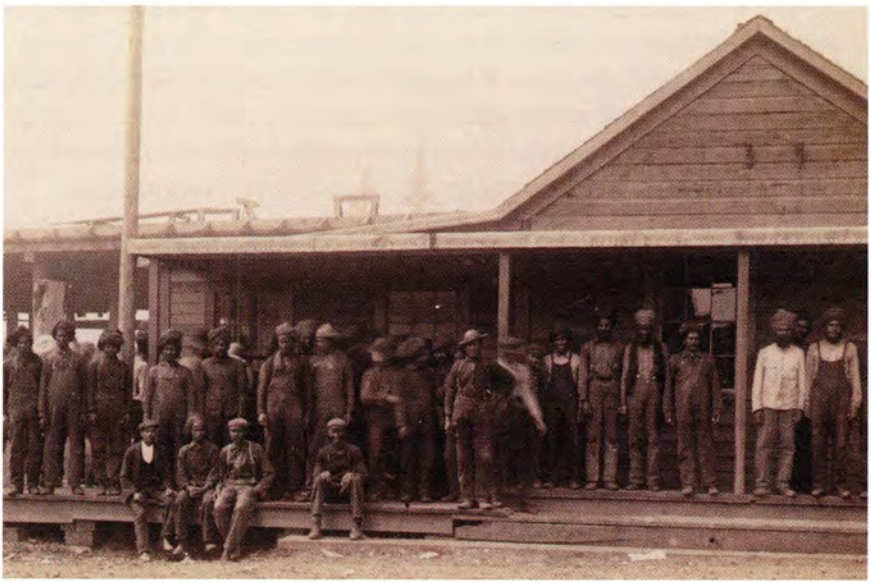
Among the many other special items in the collection are:

- An alternate version of the Komagata Maru passenger list in Punjabi
- Letters from J. Edward Bird, the attorney for the Komagata Maru passengers, to the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver concerning Bird's correspondence with Gurdit Singh and his son Balwant Singh
- Scrapbooks filled with newspaper clippings documenting early South Asian history in Vancouver, in particular the Komagata Maru incident
- Original diary of the United India Home Rule League of Canada and the Hindustani Swaraj Sabha in Vancouver, associations that gave birth to the Ghadar movement
- Passport of Bhag Singh, 1927
- Petition by the Khalsa Diwan Society of B.C. to the Government of B.C. for the right to vote in 1942
- Rare 1949 recording of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's speech at the 2nd Avenue Temple

The Arjan Singh Brar Collection is a rich addition to the Simon Fraser University Library's growing collection of records documenting South Asian history in British Columbia. Many of the items from this collection, including those listed above, have been digitized and are available online at www.komagatamarujourney.ca

ARCHIVAL IMAGES

City of Vancouver Archives Out P1067



SFU Library, Special Collections and Rare Books, B.C. Postcard Collection, MSC 130-2648

SFU Library, Special Collections and Rare Books, Arjan Singh Brar Collection

KOMAGATA MARU 1914-2014

What can we learn from this 100 year old story and how can it help influence our idea of Canada for the future? What are the living legacies of the Komagata Maru episode today?

The significance of the 100th anniversary of the Komagata Maru brings together cultural institutions across Metro Vancouver, along with artists, poets, educators, and scholars to share the stories of this history and its legacies for all Canadians. These eight organisations will present unique exhibitions, events and public programs in order to increase awareness, education and dialogue surrounding the Komagata Maru episode.

The Komagata Maru 1914-2014: Generations, Geographies and Echoes partners are:

- Progressive Intercultural Services Society (PICS)
- Khalsa Diwan Society (Ross Street Temple)
- Museum of Vancouver
- Simon Fraser University Library
- Surrey Art Gallery
- Surrey City Centre Library
- Surrey Museum
- Vancouver Maritime Museum

Each partner shares their own facet of the Komagata Maru episode through visual arts, interviews, artifacts, literature, storytelling and much more. At the heart of this is an opportunity to include diverse voices and alternative ways of looking at the Komagata Maru. This includes descendants from the Komagata Maru passengers, community pioneers, activists, educators and youth. However, one of the most important voices is yours. We encourage you to engage with our interactive and participatory events online and in person until September 2014.

http://komagatamaru100.com

Surrey Museum Exhibition: Echoes of the Komagata Maru. Credit: Dani Brown, photographer. Courtesy of Surrey Museum

Vancouver Maritime Museum Exhibition: Komagata Maru: Challenging Injustice. Credit: Gary Fiegehen, photographer. Courtesy of Vancouver Maritime Museum

Surrey Art Gallery Exhibition: Ruptures in Arrival: Art in the Wake of the Komagata Mar. Artist's talk with Ali Kazimi

Surrey Art Gallery Exhibition: Ruptures in Arrival: Art in the Wake of the Komagata Maru. Courtesy of Surrey Art Gallery.

The only artifact from the Komagata Maru - a brick thrown by a passenger during a midnight police raid. Museum of Vancouver Exhibition: Unmoored: Vancouver's Voyage of the Komagata Maru. Credit: Museum of Vancouver: Catalogue #H982.217.104.05

A LASTING LEGACY

komagatamarujourney.ca

Simon Fraser University Library gratefully acknowledges the important contributions that have resulted in the creation of our unique website that chronicles the Komagata Maru Incident.

The creation of a permanent collection in the library provides students, faculty and the community an opportunity to engage with history and re-tell stories with education and research. Digitization further opens the doors to accessibility and engages the world electronically.

You can be a part of this engagement process through involvement and investment. Your stories, your collections and even your generous donations help us to build this collection, providing resources and preserving history.

We invite you to get involved and share your history with us. Please contact us to learn more.

Virginia Hong, Director of Major Gifts
Simon Fraser University Library
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SFU LIBRARY KOMAGATA MARU 100 TEAM

SFU Library Komagata Maru 100
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Ana Yap

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PRESENTING PARTNERS & SUPPORT

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