

Community comes through and helps UCFV meet financial goal for Indo-Canadian centre

UCFV and its community supporters are celebrating the successful outcome of a two-year fundraising campaign to support the university college's new Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research.

Economic relations between Canada and India, and B.C. and the Punjab in particular, will get a boost thanks to the community fundraising campaign that will see a new research chair endowed at the University College of the Fraser Valley.

Community supporters matched \$1.25 million in grant money offered by the provincial government's Leading Edge Endowment Fund to raise a total of \$2.5 million for an endowed Regional Innovation Chair in Canada-India Business and Economic Development. UCFV was working toward a February 2006 fundraising deadline set by the provincial government, and recently met that deadline.

The chair will be filled by an appointed scholar with substantial expertise in the area of Canada-India economic development. The holder of the chair will serve as an influential resource for decision makers and Canadian business people, including both those who are familiar with the Indian market and those who want to break into it.

"We're delighted that we're going to be able to move ahead with this key component of our Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research," said UCFV president Skip Bassford. "Having this person in place will serve to strengthen the bonds developing among UCFV, our local Indo-Canadian community, and our partners in India.

"What's especially heartening about his successful campaign is that most of the donations came from

the community — from small businesses and families — rather than large corporations," Bassford continued. "People dug deeply into their pockets to support us in our quest to support research and community development in the area of Indo-Canadian studies. Many people took this cause to heart and used their leadership roles in the community to encourage others to support it."

Abbotsford businessman Parm Bains, chair of the fundraising campaign, is also pleased with the community support.

"I am very excited and pleased along with our fundraising committee to have achieved our goal of matching the provincial government's \$1.25 million for the Canada-India Business Economic Chair. The entire community can be very proud. Individuals, families, and the business sector were all behind this worthwhile cause right from the beginning. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the donors, supporters, and all the individual community members who helped with the fundraising. As well, we want to thank UCFV for sharing in our vision and helping us achieve our goal. The community is pleased to be part of such an innovative project in BC."

Bains noted that the benefits to the community, students, youth and business of the Centre and the Canada-India Business and Economic Development Chair will be far-reaching.

"The Centre's contribution on the social, cultural and historical side will assist in strengthening our community; and students and business will benefit from the research and educational offerings at UCFV. The business community will realize economic and business opportu-

nities with India through many strategic partnerships — some of which have already commenced."

Abbotsford-Mt. Lehman MLA and Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services Mike de Jong is a big supporter of UCFV's Indo-Canadian initiatives.

"Congratulations are due to the countless supporters who provided the matching funding for the research chair in record-breaking time," he said. "I can't think of another project that drew this level of support in such a short time. It's a real tribute both to our community and to the UCFV team that organized the campaign."

Events and activities that supported the campaign included a radiothon on Sher-e-Punjab Radio, the New Horizons gala dinner, support from the Indian High Commissioner and the Chief Minister of the Punjab, and a Canadian Cultural PRIDE golf tournament.

The soon-to-be-appointed chair will work with the Indo-Canadian community to draw on the 'social capital' inherent in already established family and business connections, and to foster new and expanded connections.

In addition to the new Regional Innovation Chair, UCFV will continue to build other aspects of its Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research. Currently, UCFV offers several courses in Indo-Canadian Studies and Punjabi language. It is developing a cohort of its business administration degree to be offered in Chandigarh, India. It has developed partnerships with Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar, and Panjab University in Chandigarh.