

THE DAILY SPECIAL

PROUD HERITAGE



The Gur Sikh Temple, built in Abbotsford in 1911, was designated a national heritage site in the summer of 2002.

wooden windows painstakingly rebuilt to match the original details.

"I am really proud of it," Thandi said, glancing around. "We had a lot of opposition — a lot of opposition — to save this. But we tried to tell the people — we have to save this."

Now the community appreciates that the right decision was made.

"This is a historic place — a lot of people realize that this is a good thing that has been done," Thandi said.

The temple is also a symbol of the way the pioneer community worked together, he said.

"When we were less people, we all cooperated. We worked for the community," said Thandi. "Now people don't even think about their own families, let alone the community."

Not only did Sikhs work hard on its construction, but others contributed and participated, Sangha said.

"This temple belongs not only to the Sikh community, but all South Asians," he said. "Hindus



MATSQUI-SUMAS-ABBOTSFORD MUSEUM

Members of the Abbotsford temple pose on the porch in this photograph circa 1920. The temple is a symbol of the way the pioneer community worked together, Sucha Singh Thandi says.

and Muslims were also involved in building the temple."

The job is not over. More volunteers are hustling to finish the landscaping before the ceremony.

And Sangha and others are still fundraising to cover the

inevitable extra bills that come in whenever a restoration of this kind is undertaken.

The Abbotsford society is also working with other longtime Indo-Canadian groups to collect and preserve other historic artifacts and records of the South

Asian community in B.C. They are hoping to work with the University College of the Fraser Valley to get an archiving project going.

And then they plan to open a first-floor museum in the restored temple, where children, tourists and others can learn about the history of the Sikh pioneers, who first arrived in the Abbotsford area in 1902.

The restored temple will have the Sikh holy book, Guru Granth Sahib, and serve as a real gurdwara, where worshippers can pray and hear recitations.

Already, the society is getting requests from young engaged couples who would like to marry at the temple. An engagement ceremony is scheduled for June for the grandson of pioneer Inder Singh Gill, who was instrumental in getting the project going, but passed away before its completion.

Said Sangha: "The kids want to get married in the same temple that their parents were married in."

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