



An elder of the Khalsa Diwan Society leads visiting dignitaries, local residents, including some descendants of Sikh pioneers, in a prayer during the consecration of the heritage Sikh gurdwara on Sunday. — JEAN KONDA-WITTE/TIMES

Grant helps restore gurdwara

CHRISTINA TOTH
CToth@abbotsfordtimes.com

A \$25,000 grant from the provincial government for the heritage Sikh temple will help with some of the \$2.3 million in restoration costs.

"We're happy with that. We still have a lot of stuff to do, with painting and such inside. It's not a 100 per cent done," said Randy Kailey, treasurer of the Khalsa Diwan Society, which is overseeing the restoration of the gurdwara.

The gurdwara, built in 1911 with timbers carried by hand by Sikh mill workers from nearby Mill Lake, was commemorated as a national historic site on Sunday, the first such site in Canada that does not reflect a French or English heritage.

B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell made the announcement during the five hours of parade, prayers and ceremony on Sunday, which attracted up to 3,000 people despite rain and

UCFV TELLS SIKH STORY

The Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at the University College of the Fraser Valley has been commissioned to document the 100-year history of Sikh pioneers in British Columbia. The results of the four-year project are to be complete in time for the temple's 2011 centennial.

hail showers.

Other dignitaries included the province of Punjab's Minister of Heritage, Hira Ghabria, Sheila Copps, who was the Minister of Heritage in August 2002, provincial parliamentary secretary for heritage, Jim Abbott, local MLAs Michael de Jong and John van Dongen, Abbotsford mayor George Ferguson and Mission mayor James Atebe, members of their councils, Abbotsford MP Ed Fast, and Darshan Singh Dhaliwal,

a well-known Sikh philanthropist from California.

The event went on without a hitch, Kailey said, but there is still work to be done on the building itself and the grounds, which now feature a public square, a watercourse and waterfall, and two impressive statues of British Indian cavalymen, who travelled by train across Canada in 1897 after participating in Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in London.

The federal government pitched in \$560,000 for the restoration work, the Indo-Canadian community has so far donated \$600,000, and the rest has come from a bank loan.

The society will continue to fundraise, to cover costs and to develop the public museum that will be housed in the lower level of the gurdwara, Kailey said.

The building will also be available for special occasions, such as engagement parties, he said.