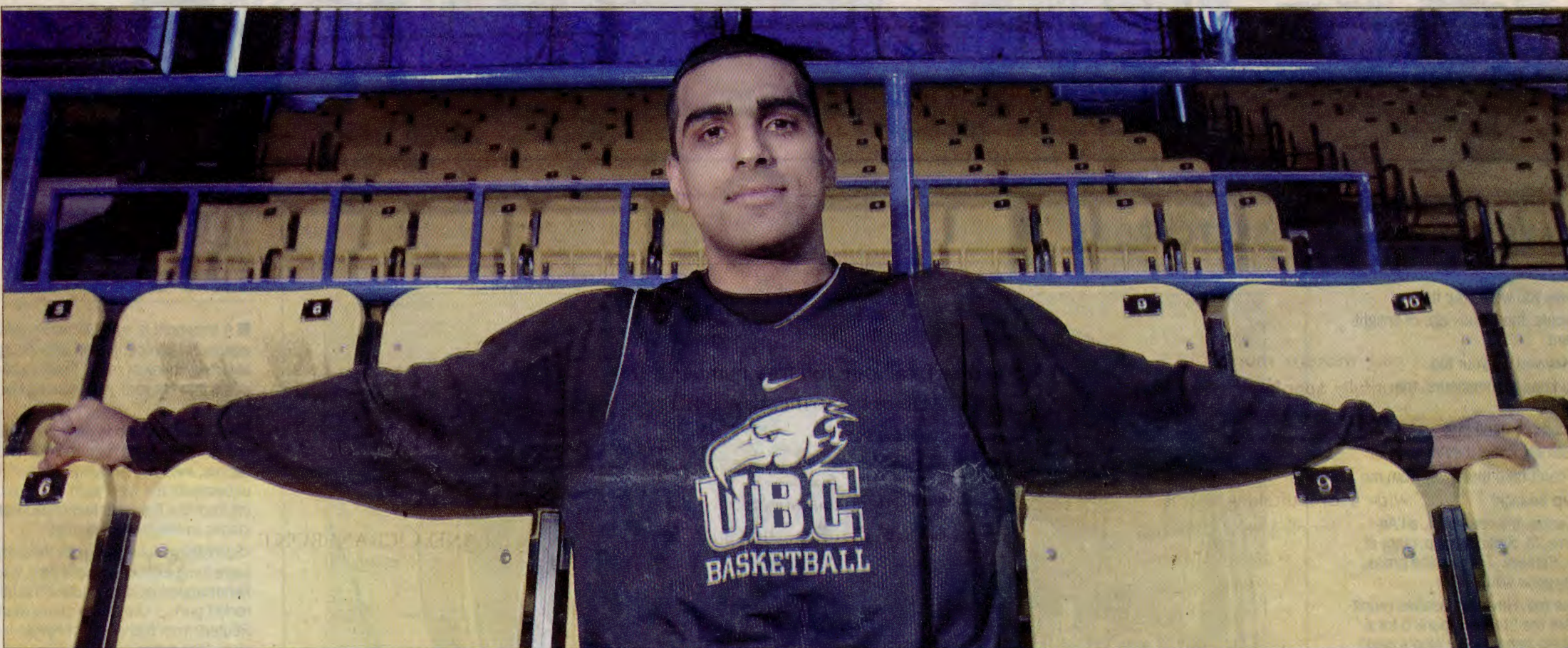


AN ERA OF INFLUENCE

100 Indo-Canadians who are making a difference in British Columbia



WARD PERRIN/VANCOUVER SUN

Pasha Bains is hoping to take his basketball skills to Europe this fall after a stellar high school and university career that included time with both UBC and SFU.

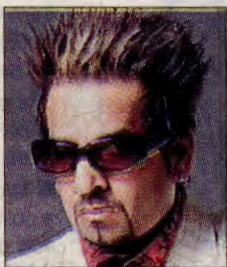
JAZZY B

Sector: Arts

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 27

Jaswinder Singh Bains moved from his little village in Punjab to Vancouver at the age of five. A singer with a colourful urban fashion sense and movie star looks, Jazzy B has captured renown worldwide as a bhangra artist and hip hop producer. He has released 14 albums since 1993 and collaborates with fellow bhangra artist and producer Sukshinder Shinda.



HARRY BAINS

Sector: Politics

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 37

Surrey MLA Harry Bains has long been active in politics and in the community, especially in Surrey. A long-time union organizer, Bains also served on the Kwantlen College board of governors from 1993 to 1999. A rookie MLA, Bains is the opposition critic for the 2010 Olympic Games.



PARM BAINS

Sector: Community

Origin: Canada

A young political activist, Bains has been a key connection between the South Asian community and the B.C. government in his job as a community outreach worker. Born in Victoria and raised in Richmond, Bains is a co-founder of the United — a volunteer group whose objective is to combat youth violence through mentorship, sports recreation, and awareness campaigns. And he is a board member of the South Asian Community Coalition against youth violence. Bains sits on the Royal Roads University Communication and Culture Advisory Board.



DAVINDER BAINS-GILL

Sector: Business

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 36

If a woman sees a sari she loves in a Bollywood film, fashion-designer Davinder Bains-Gill will create her



PASHA BAINS

Sector: Sports

Origin: Canada

Basketball great Pasha Bains, 27, was born in Vancouver and raised in Richmond. His parents — father Paul and mother Nimmi — are natives of Jalandhar, a city in the state of Punjab, India.

Paul Bains immigrated to Vancouver in 1969 and Nimmi Bains came here in 1974.

Pasha Bains was an outstanding player at the high-school and university levels of basketball. He led the Richmond Colts to the 1998 B.C. AAA high-school boys championship in his Grade 12 year, when he averaged a phenomenal 35 points per game in the provincial finals and was named the tournament's MVP.

Bains also played for the Colts in the 1996 and 1997 provincial finals and finished his high-school career as the tournament's career scoring leader, with 317 points in 12 games.

After high school, Bains played briefly at the University of Wyoming before transferring to South Carolina's Clemson University. At Clemson, he was presented the Arthur Ashe Award for excellence in athletics and academics.

own version for the customer by changing the color or adding some extra embroidery. Born in Bhatinda, about two hours from Amritsar in the Indian state of Punjab, Bains-Gill came to Canada with her family in 1972. After starting a home-based fashion design business while she was a financial aid worker for the Ministry of Social Services, Bains-Gill expanded her passion into a full-time career when she opened Armaan DBG in Surrey five years ago. In Hindi, armaan means desire. Bains-Gill designs clothing for women, men and children and has recently expanded to include fusion clothing, especially prom dresses, that combine an Oscar look with Indian fashion themes.

RENU BAKSHI

Sector: Media

Origin: Canada

This familiar face on CTV British Columbia is now the regular late-night news anchor. Bakshi has been a prominent journalist for years, working in both print and broadcast before being hired at CTV. Bakshi is not afraid to tackle the tough issues and got a lot of flak for an article she wrote in Maclean's five years ago about gang violence in the Indo-Canadian community. But she credits the piece with spurring her community to action.



Bains's most successful years in university basketball were in B.C. He transferred from Clemson to Simon Fraser University in 2002, and played for Clan teams in the 2002-03 and 2003-04 seasons. He was the leading scorer in Canadian Interuniversity Sport both seasons and was named the CIS player of the year in 2003-04.

Bains concluded his university career in 2004-05 with the UBC Thunderbirds, leading the team to its first perfect regular season (20-0) in Canada West conference games.

Bains also spent five summers playing for Canadian national teams — most recently in 2005 at the World University Games in Izmir, Turkey.

Bains now works as a coach with Drive Fitness Inc., a Richmond company he co-founded in 2004. Originally a summer basketball camp, Drive Fitness now operates year-round for players in Grades 2 through 12.

Bains plans to play his first season of professional basketball later this year in Europe, either with a team in the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

PAUL BINNING

Sector: Arts

Origin: Canada

If you love bhangra, the energetic, colourful and drumbeat-heavy Punjabi folk dance, you have Vancouver-born Paul Binning to thank. Binning is a community activist and bhangra teacher with the Punjabi Artists Association of Richmond, which he co-founded in 1970, using events like bhangra performances to educate others about Indian culture. Binning's renowned dance troupe, formed in 1972, has appeared at fundraisers and events all over B.C., including the Vancouver Folk Music Festival, and has taken its act to eastern Canada and the U.S. Binning has also been involved in the production of Punjabi plays presented by Vancouver Sath.



SADHU BINNING

Sector: Arts

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 41

Binning is a central figure in the Punjabi arts community in B.C. As an author and a UBC professor, he is a big reason why the Punjabi lan-



guage has flourished in this province in recent decades. Binning has published several books of poetry, fiction and plays in English and Punjabi since here as a 19-year-old in 1967. His works have been included in more than 20 anthologies in both languages. He is a founding member of Vancouver Sath, a theatre collective. He sat on the B.C. Arts Board from 1993 to 1995 and has been teaching Punjabi at UBC since 1988. Binning is also one of the founders of the Punjabi Language Education Association, which has successfully got Punjabi courses introduced into the public school curriculum across the Lower Mainland.

MANDAKRANTA BOSE

Sector: Arts

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 33

Although she trained as a classical dancer in India, Bose won a major scholarship to attend Oxford University and become a scholar. With fond memories of the relaxed way diverse religions blended in India, Bose ended up taking religious studies and then teaching it, particularly Hinduism, at the University of B.C. She has been director of the Centre for India and South Asia Research. She has also authored books on the *Ramayana* (one of the great Indian epics) and on women and religion. She has edited many volumes, including *The World My Mother Gave Me: Asian Women's Perspectives and Perceptions in Literature*.



ARVINDER BUBBER

Sector: Education

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 17

Bubber is serving his fourth term as chairman of the Kwantlen University College's Board of Governors and is vice-chairman of the Premier's Asia Pacific Trade Council. He attended university in India and the U.K. before moving to Canada to begin his career as a chartered accountant. He is the former director of revenue and fiscal services for the City of Regina where he was also manager of the internal audit department. He established his own practice in Vancouver in 1991.



PREMAYA CHAITANYA

Sector: Religion

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 28

Premaya and his wife, Rukmini, are major figures in B.C.'s Hindu community.

Premaya is the priest at Mahalakshmi Temple at 467 East 11th Ave. His wife, Rukmini, is a going concern in the interfaith community, as well as in teaching meditation, yoga and Hindu thought. Given the fashionability of yoga these days, Rukmini recently told *The Vancouver Sun* that yoga practitioners should strive to learn about the depth of yogic tradition.



NADIA CHANEY

Sector: Arts

Origin: Canada

Chaney is a noted hip-hop artist, poet rapper and emcee. Her Muslim father was born in Puna, India, and her Catholic mother in Goa, India. Blending eclectic forms of spirituality into hip hop, Chaney performs in all sorts of venues and, with the group Metaphor, has taught hip hop in more than 100 B.C. schools and youth detention centres. She is also a public intellectual, engaging in scholarly discussions around the province, including with Simon Fraser University's Wosk Centre for Dialogue.



GULZAR SINGH CHEEMA

Sector: Politics

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 29

A physician trained in India, Cheema has a long record in Canadian politics. He was elected to the legislature of Manitoba twice as a Liberal before resigning his seat there and moving to Surrey, where he set up a family medical practice. Cheema ran for the legislature in B.C. unsuccessfully in 1996, eventually gaining office in the Liberal landslide of 2001. He has served as minister of state for mental health services and immigration issues. Cheema's attempt to move to the federal arena in 2004 was crushed by the victory of Nina Grewal, who handily won the riding of Fleetwood-Port Kells.



RAJ CHOUHAN

Sector: Politics

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 35

Chouhan was elected as the New Democrat MLA for Burnaby North in 2005.



SHUSHMA DATT

Sector: Media

Origin: Kenya

Years in Canada: 36

Just this month, the Royal B.C. Museum unveiled a new exhibit called "the Party" which features 123 colourful British Columbians who have helped shape the province's history. Amid former premiers, artists and athletes is Shushma Datt, an entrepreneur in the field of multicultural broadcasting in B.C.

A long-time community leader with a 1997 YWCA Woman of Distinction award and a 1992 Order of B.C. among her many accolades, Datt owns Burnaby's I.T. Productions, a media company aimed at the Lower Mainland's South Asian market.

I.T. operates RJ 1200, which went on the air in November 2006 and Radio Rim Jhim, which Datt founded in 1987. Datt's company also produces nine television programs shown on OMNI TV and Shaw's Multicultural Channel, a channel Datt helped found back in 1979. Datt is the only founding producer still involved with the channel.

The energetic, witty journalist-turned-businesswoman has always tried to use her media outlets

to advance important political issues, whether it be violence against women or the fight against religious extremism. She has also been active in the oldest South Asian women's group in B.C. — the India Mahila Association.

In the early 1980s, she sparked intense reaction when she brought TV cameras to a clinic where female fetuses were being aborted.

"We filmed the Indians going there and shamed them. People were very pissed off. I was very passionate about it. I just couldn't fathom the fact that women were not given the same status as men were in the community."

Datt received a *Business in Vancouver* influential woman award last year. Born in Nairobi, she became fascinated by radio as a child and went on to land a job at BBC radio at 19.

Her programming now includes 17 languages, mostly English, Punjabi and Hindi, but also Tagalog, Farsi and Italian

office. Active in the Ismaili Muslim community, she is a former convener of the annual Agha Khan partnership walk for international development. Obtaining her law degree at the University of B.C., she went on to work as a lawyer and now, in addition to serving as a judge, sits on many professional and governmental bodies. Once asked why she doesn't wear a veil or head scarf, Dossa said, "The Koran talks about modesty but it doesn't talk about being veiled. The Koran is actually the first document that regards women as legal people. The prophet Mohammed was very much for the emancipation of women."

KARIMAH ES SABAR

Sector: Business

Origin: Kenya

Years in Canada: 6

Karimah Es Sabar markets the province of B.C. as a global biotech mecca in her role as president of LifeSciences BC. She has the biotech world beating a path to our doorstep. Es Sabar first came to Canada in 1988 to work for Connaught Labs, winning the Gold Canada Award for business excellence. She followed that with stints in the U.K. and Africa, where she founded Kenya's SAL Healthcare. Es Sabar's business smarts are buttressed by a solid science background. She holds a joint honours degree in chemistry and biochemistry and took her master's degree in neurochemistry at the University of London.



ARUN GARG

Sector: Medicine

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 43

Dr. Arun K. Garg is a clinical professor of pathology in the Faculty of Medicine at UBC and director of lab services for the Fraser Health Region. Born in Agra, India, Garg completed a PhD in biochemistry in Saskatchewan before moving to B.C. and eventually pursuing a career in medicine. He has served on the boards of the BC and Canadian Medical Associations and been a key player in health care reform in B.C. and across the country. He is a founding member of Canadian Physicians with Interest in South Asia and a member of the Laurier Institute think tank for cultural diversity and public policy.



SEEMI GHAZI

Sector: Education

Origin: Pakistan

Years in Canada: 26

Seemi Ghazi teaches Arabic and lectures on Islam in UBC's department of classical, near eastern and reli-



17, 2005. He serves as opposition critic for human rights, multiculturalism and immigration. Chouhan was the founding president of the Canadian Farm workers' Union and served as a director of the Hospital Employees Union. He was also a member of the Labour Relations Board of B.C. and the Arbitration Bureau of B.C. Chouhan was a founding member of the B.C. Organization to Fight Racism and worked relentlessly in promoting human rights and racial equality. He has served as vice-president of the B.C. Human Rights Defenders since 2003.

FARID DAMJI

Sector: Community

Origin: Uganda

Years in Canada: 34

Farid Damji is the media liaison for Metro Vancouver's roughly 12,000 Ismaili Muslims, a generally well-educated and well-off community that follows the Aga Khan, an urbane European billionaire, philanthropist and spiritual teacher. As a volunteer representative of the Ismaili Council of B.C., Damji, who is affable and ever-polite, stick-handles media inquiries into the relatively private community.



HERB DHALIWAL

Sector: Politics

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 50

Herb Dhaliwal grew up in south Vancouver and went on to UBC, earning a commerce degree and starting a small business from his basement. Dhaliwal was first elected as a Liberal MP in 1993, later becoming the first-ever South Asian cabinet minister when he was appointed to the National Revenue portfolio in 1997. He left politics to return to his limousine business in 2003.



KASHMIR SINGH DHALIWAL

Sector: Religion

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 25

Dhaliwal is the president of the Khalsa Diwan Society, which runs the historic Ross Street temple in Vancouver. He has been a community and political activist for years. A decade ago, he was excommunicated in a controversial move by a high priest in India upset at the use of tables and chairs in the *langar* or community dining hall of some B.C. Sikh temples. The furniture issue divided moderates and fundamentalists in the Sikh community. Dhaliwal is also a key political organizer and has been active in the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party at both the provincial and federal level.



FABIAN DAWSON

Sector: Media

Origin: Malaysia

Years in Canada: 20

Journalist Fabian Dawson came to Vancouver with his wife Anne in 1988 from Malaysia. He joined *The Province* newspaper in



1989, working as reporter, assignment editor, city editor and news editor before becoming deputy editor in 2004. Among his journalism awards is the Jack Webster Award for Best Community Reporting, and the prestigious Daniel Pearl Award, presented in 2006 to Dawson and a *Province-Calgary Herald* team for *Abandoned Brides*, a five-part series on sham marriages. Dawson's investigative stories have taken him from Asia to Central America, and have led to the production of four documentary films and a made-for TV movie.

BALTEJ SINGH DHILLON

Sector: Law

Origin: Malaysia

Years in Canada: 25

After joining the Mounties in 1990, Dhillon sparked a heated national debate simply because he wanted to maintain his turban — a symbol of his faith — as part of the historic RCMP uniform. He won the right to do so, leading the way for many other young Sikh officers to follow suit. Born in Malaysia, Dhillon speaks five languages and immigrated to Surrey as a teen. He is now a sergeant and polygraph examiner for B.C.'s major crime unit. He has worked on high-profile cases like the Air India bombing and serial killer Robert Pickton.



PETER DHILLON

Sector: Business

Origin: Canada

Richmond cranberry grower Peter Dhillon is a busy man when he's not running the Richberry Group of Companies, started by his father, Rashpal Dhillon — Canada's first Indo-Canadian RCMP officer — in 1978. In February, Dhillon was appointed to the board of governors of Simon Fraser University. He also holds directorships or executive positions with such diverse organizations as B.C. Ferry Corp., Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., the provincial Agricultural Land Commission, the VGH and UBC Hospital Foundation and the Vancouver branch of Right to Play. Dhillon is also known as the go-to man for politicians, like Jean Chretien and Bob Rae, trying to get an entry into B.C.'s Indo-Canadian community.



ROBIN DHIR

Sector: Politics

Origin: Canada

Dhir, a successful Burnaby businessman, was taught by his family at an early age about the importance of giving back to the community. He has taken that to heart with both his political activism and charitable work. Involved in the Conservative Party, Dhir has volunteered in every federal, provincial, and municipal election and leadership convention since 1983. He has also served as a federal Tory spokesman and is a director of the Vancouver South-Burnaby Riding Association. Dhir joined his family property business — Twin Brook Developments Ltd. — in 2005.



AMAR S. DOMAN

Sector: Business

Origin: Canada

Doman founded The Futura Corporation, an asset management and investment firm which has \$12.5 billion in revenues and 2,000 employees. Under Doman's leadership, Futura has completed more than a dozen acquisitions, and has holdings in public companies, investments in the private sector, property management and ownership of private companies. Doman, 38, is also chairman of the board of directors for CanWel Building Materials Income fund. In 2005, he won the Ernst & Young business-to-business category entrepreneur of the year award.



RAMINDER DOSANJH

Sector: Community

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 35

A retired ESL teacher and college administrator, Dosanjh has been at the forefront of the women's movement in the South Asian community in B.C. for more than 30 years. She is one of the founders of the India Mahila Association, the first group to take on violence against women and fetal sex selection within the Indo-Canadian community. She has been a political organizer and strategist — not only for her husband Ujjal's provincial and federal election campaigns, but for a series of other candidates over the years. Dosanjh — Rami to her friends — has defended her Sikh culture when it has been stereotyped and attacked in the media. She has also boldly challenged her own community when she felt it necessary.



UJJAL DOSANJH

Sector: Politics

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 40

India-born Ujjal Dosanjh is truly a Renaissance man. Teacher, lawyer, social activist, B.C. attorney-general and then premier and federal health minister. It is an impressive resume for anyone. Dosanjh began his political career long before he ever ran for office, working with the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and acting as chair of the Labour Advocacy Research Association, which laid the groundwork for the creation of the Canadian Farm Workers' Union. Dosanjh was born and raised in India before moving to the U.K. He came to Canada at the age of 21. At first he worked and took community college classes before attending SFU full-time to earn an honours degree in political science and then on to UBC, where he completed his law degree.



SHEHNI DOSSA

Sector: Law

Origin: Kenya

Years in Canada: 34

Shehni Dossa was appointed a provincial court judge in 2000, when the B.C. New Democratic Party was in



deep knowledge of Sunni Muslim history and philosophy, especially the mystical tradition of Sufism, Ghazi is dedicated to deepening understanding in the West of little-understood Islam. In a 2007 pre-Christmas dialogue on the meaning of Jesus, organized by *The Vancouver Sun*, Ghazi said: "Many well-read Christians and others have no idea Jesus is even an important figure and prophet for Muslims. Jesus is one in a lineage of five prophets that began with the first human being, Adam, and included Noah, Moses and Abraham."

BALWANT SINGH GILL

Sector: Community

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 38

Gill is the moderate long-time president of Surrey's Guru Nanak Sikh temple, having won a key election in 1997 after Sikh fundamentalists held two violent protests at the Scott Road religious centre. He has been an outspoken opponent of extremism and was targeted in a drive-by shooting a decade ago. He was also on a hit list, along with his close friend Tara Singh Hayer, who was gunned down in 1998. Gill heads a coalition of Sikh societies and has been at the forefront of a number of community social issues — most recently as a supporter of paralysed refugee claimant Laibar Singh.



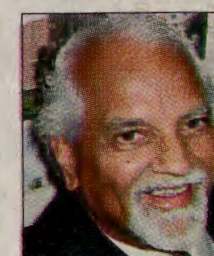
CHARAN GILL

Sector: Politics

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 41

A long-time community activist and political figure, Gill founded the Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society 20 years ago. The society has now become the key agency in the South Asian community offering seniors' housing, counselling, ESL classes, employment programs and advocacy for new immigrants. A social worker by profession, Gill was also one of the founders of the B.C. Organization to Fight Racism and the Canadian Farm workers' Union. He has run unsuccessfully for the New Democratic Party at the provincial and federal level.



DR. GURDEV SINGH GILL

Sector: Community

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 59

Retired physician Gurdev Singh Gill was the first Indian immigrant to graduate in medicine from the University of B.C. Dr. Gill was also a key community activist and former president of the Khalsa Diwan Society through some of the early human rights struggles that faced the Indo-Canadian community. He was part of several delegations to Ottawa in the 1950s to push for voting and immigration rights. In recent years, he has devoted his energy and finances to charity, starting the Indo-Canadian Friendship Society of B.C. to raise funds to help Punjabi villages put in modern sewage and water systems.



SAMIR MANJI**Sector:** Business**Origin:** Pakistan**Years in Canada:** 35

Samir Manji is the president and CEO of Amica Mature Lifestyles Inc. A chartered accountant by profession, Manji founded Amica in 1997. It manages 25 luxury independent-living retirement communities in Canada and elsewhere, including nine under development. Married with three children, he is one of the leading figures in Greater Vancouver's large Muslim Ismaili community, and supports Muslim art and culture.

**HARBHAJAN MANN****Sector:** Arts**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 37

This well-known singer and actor was born in Punjab in 1965, but raised in Surrey along with his six siblings. He started his singing career 30 years ago and performed shows after school for local South Asians. His first big break came in 1992 with the success of his album *Chithiye Nee Chithiye*. But he was still known mostly among Indo-Canadians and he recognized the lack of a major Punjabi music scene in Canada and returned to India. His music entered the mainstream a few years later when MTV India started promoting his work.

**FAZIL MIHLAR****Sector:** Media**Origin:** Sri Lanka**Years in Canada:** 19

Vancouver Sun editorial page editor Fazil Mihar came to Canada to finish his undergraduate degree when violence disrupted life in Sri Lanka. He has since attended SFU, Carleton and Harvard honing his knowledge of public and financial affairs in the process. In addition to his work directing *The Sun's* editorial stance and leading the newspaper's editorial board, he has authored several studies examining the effects of regulation on trade and has appeared as an expert witness for the Commons and Senate committee hearings on labour law and financial service reforms.

**BIF NAKED****Sector:** Arts**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 26

Born Beth Torbert in New Delhi, India on June 15, 1971, Bif Naked has been a staple of the Vancouver music scene for more than a decade. The diminutive, tattooed singer is known for her brash, in-your-face punk style, but she is also gaining increasing attention for her acting ability. The



IAN LINDSAY/VANCOUVER SUN

IRSHAD MANJI**Sector:** Media**Origin:** Uganda**Years in Canada:** 36

Irshad Manji is a beacon for moderate Islam of global renown. Formerly of Uganda, Manji, who grew up in B.C., was called "Osama bin Laden's worst nightmare" by the *New York Times* for her work in print and video journalism and as an author. A UBC graduate and Governor-General's academic award winner, Manji encourages young people to follow her example as a director of The Moral Courage Project at New York University. The program empowers youth to speak unpopular truths within their communities.

And Manji walks the walk as an opponent of radical Islam.

She has chronicled her own journey to reconcile faith with freedom with her book, *The Trouble With Islam Today* and the PBS documentary, *Faith Without Fear*.

Manji offers her book for free download on her website in an effort to get her message out in countries where the book is banned. The Arabic version has been downloaded more than 250,000 times.

The documentary was shot partly in Vancouver and Toronto as well as locations around Europe and in Yemen, where some of the film's most powerful scenes of abuse of women were shot.

Manji describes her struggle as the revival of *ijtihad*, the Muslim tradition of critical thought, now lost in too-narrow interpretations of Islam and the Koran.

The list of awards and accolades Manji has amassed over the past few years is astounding. *Oprah Magazine* gave her the Chutzpah Award in 2004 for "audacity, nerve, boldness and conviction."

Ms. Magazine dubbed her a Feminist for the 21st Century. She was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum.

Manji has made her mark in Canadian journalism in every medium available to her. A national affairs editorialist for the *Ottawa Citizen* at the age of 24, she would later host *QueerTelevision* for Toronto's Citytv. Manji has written columns for the *Globe and Mail*, *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times*.

AMARJIT SINGH SAMRA**Sector:** Business**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 28

Samra came to Canada from India in 1980, seeking a better life. He opened A-Class Autobody in 1983 and built up a successful business that is thriving today. He is now the president of the Surrey-Delta Punjabi Bazaar Association. But he wanted to give back and became a founding member of the SPARK Foundation, a unique program that works in partnership with Kwantlen University College. SPARK assists students with cultural, economic or social boundaries who would likely not graduate from high school or continue on to post-secondary education.

**EMANUEL SANDHU****Sector:** Sports**Origin:** Canada

Skate. Sing. Dance. There may never be another figure skater who combines so many artistic elements as Vancouver's Emanuel Sandhu. He relocated from Toronto to Vancouver with his coach Joanne McLeod in the late 1990s. Sandhu burst onto the national scene in 1998 when, as an 18-year-old, he nearly dethroned reigning world champion Elvis Stojko for the Canadian men's title. His second-place finish that year would normally have qualified him for the Nagano Winter Olympics. However, Sandhu didn't have enough international competitions to compete under existing Canadian Olympic Association rules. A three-time Canadian men's champion, Sandhu's career high point was beating Russia's Evgeny Plushenko to win the 2003 Grand Prix Final in Colorado Springs.

**GIAN SINGH SANDHU****Sector:** Business**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 38

The Williams Lake founder of the World Sikh Organization is a successful businessman, community volunteer and recipient of the Order of B.C. He founded Jackpine Forest Products Ltd. in 1987, now the 12th-largest lumber-producing company in B.C. with nearly 300 employees. The company makes a point of hiring men and women from diverse backgrounds and of employing companies owned by first nations people. Sandhu matches his workers' donations to several charities and created two bursaries to help high school students pursue post-secondary education. He also provided funding for Williams Lake to build a crematorium.

**BALWANT SINGH SANGHERA****Sector:** Community

36-year-old had a substantial role in the 2005 film *Crossing* and had a part on the TV show *The L Word*. She was nominated in 2002 for a Juno Award for her album, *Purge*. Bif Naked announced in January that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer, for which she is now receiving treatment.

WALLY OPPAL

Sector: Law

Origin: Canada

The B.C. attorney-general and former appeal court justice Oppal was born in Vancouver in 1940, the son of a Sikh pioneer Hari Oppal, who had come to Canada in 1918 and his Indian bride Gurdial, who he brought to here in the 1930s. Following on the victories of his community to gain greater civil rights, Oppal was able to go to law school at UBC. He worked as a prosecutor and was appointed to the county court in 1981 before being elevated to the B.C. Supreme Court in 1985. He was appointed to the B.C. Court of Appeal in 2003. Oppal was always outspoken, making politics a natural fit for him.



KEWAL PABLA

Sector: Business

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 36

Pabla is a fixture in B.C.'s oldest "Little India" area — Vancouver's Main Street between 49th and 51st Avenues. He owns the Himalaya restaurant at 6587 Main and has been a developer in the neighbourhood for years. He is a founder of the Original Punjabi Market Association of B.C., which brought Indian festivals like Diwali and Vaisakhi to the streets of Vancouver. He helped lobby for street signs in Punjabi and recently he has been lobbying the government to build an India Gate to mark the historic area's unique culture.



MARIO PINTO

Sector: Education

Origin: Sri Lanka

Years in Canada: 42

Mario Pinto is vice-president of research at Simon Fraser University and a co-founder of the Centre for Drug Research and Development, an organization created in 2006 to help fund drug research beyond its early stages, through development, clinical trials and commercialization. Pinto is a pioneer in the field of chemical biology, and has won numerous awards for his work, including research aimed at finding the next generation of vaccines.



INDIRA PRAHST

Sector: Education

Origin: Canada

Prahst is a sociology instructor at Langara College, who has gained prominence in the last few years as a community activist



tackling difficult social issues like gangs and domestic violence. She has organized forums, inviting students and community members to participate and offer solutions. And she has tackled stereotypes of the community in the mainstream media through her columns in the Indo-Canadian Voice. She is also involved in groups like the South Asian Family Association, the South Asian Education Film Society and the South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy.

GURCHARAN RAMPURI

Sector: Arts

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 44

A renowned Punjabi literary figure, the Coquitlam resident was born in India in 1929. He has published eight volumes of his poems and been a leading member of several writers' organizations since immigrating to Canada in 1964. He has earned his living as a municipal clerk, a cloth-merchant, a journalist and an electrical draftsman. Rampuri was once attacked and beaten in downtown Vancouver after writing several articles condemning religious extremism in Canada.



MALKIT, CHARAN and GURJIT SINGH PUREWAL

Sector: Business

Origin: India

Years in Canada: Malkit 38, Charan 36, Gurjit 21

When the Purewal brothers immigrated to B.C. in the 1970s, they started out working on farms and in lumber mills. In 1980, they started a blueberry farm with just 50 acres of land. Today, they own thousands of acres and are the biggest producers of blueberries in North America. They sell more than \$60 million in blueberries every year. They also operate a \$25 million, 150,000-square-foot blueberry-processing plant. Purewal Blueberry Farms Ltd. was one of only three companies in Canada to win the prestigious Select Safeway Supplier of the year. The Purewals are also noted for contributing to the Canadian wrestling world. The family "adopted" Daniel Igali as one of their own when he first arrived in Canada from Nigeria. Igali went on to win Canada's first Olympic gold for wrestling in 2000.

BELLE PURI

Sector: Media

Origin: Canada

The granddaughter of a Sikh pioneer named Bagga Singh, Puri is now the popular host of CBC Radio One's *On The Coast*. Puri is an award-winning journalist with 30 years experience, who joined the CBC in



1992. She has worked as a reporter, producer and host in private radio as well as private and public television.

JATINDER RAI

Sector: Media

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 33

Jatinder Rai is the founder of Vancouver-based Response Advertising, an agency that specializes in reaching multicultural markets throughout Canada and the United States. The firm provides services in several Asian languages such as Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Hindi and Filipino for major corporations. Rai is considered a pioneer by his peers in the multicultural marketing industry and has been asked to speak at number of conferences on the issues such as "Developing Brand Awareness in the multicultural markets." He emigrated to Canada at the age of 7 and was raised in Duncan. He is on the board of directors of the Insurance Corporation of B.C. and previously was a director of the Open Learning Agency and Granville Island Trust.



ROB RAI

Sector: Education

Origin: Canada

Rai is a youth diversity liaison with the Surrey School District. He has worked on the front lines connecting with troubled youth for several years and has done outreach with parents on the warning signs of gang activity. He encourages South Asian families not to "cocoon" but to get involved in the broader community. He has helped start a special program in Surrey for kids who are suspended from school called the IR3 program — the intervention, refocus, reflect and reintegrate program. Rather than being sent home when they've been suspended from school, students attend a two-day workshop focused on self-esteem, conflict resolution and character building.



SARWAN SINGH RANDHAWA

Sector: Community

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 34

This Vancouver activist and community leader was born and raised in Punjab before arriving in Canada in 1974. The retired sawmill worker served for years on the executive of Khalsa Diwan — the largest and oldest Sikh Society in North America. During his tenure, he was instrumental in organizing the annual Vaisakhi parade and a health fair, attracting hundreds of thousands of participants. Randhawa was appointed a member of the B.C. Human Rights Advisory Council in 2000 and an advisory board member for the Ministry of Children and Family Development the following year.



Origin: India

Years in Canada: 42

Sanghera moved to B.C. from Punjab in 1966, devoting his life to teaching and activism. He is a well-respected multicultural advocate and a bridge-builder between communities and generations. He has worked with some of the most difficult youth mental health and behavioural problems. And he was one of the first in his community to take up the issue of gang violence, organizing a number of critical forums. Sanghera is president of both the Richmond Multicultural Concerns Society and the Punjabi Language Education Association of British Columbia. He is chair of Richmond's Intercultural Advisory Committee, vice-president of the East Richmond Community Association and a long-time organizer of Multi-Fest, a summer festival to celebrate Richmond's diversity.



KULWINDER SANGHERA

Sector: Business

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 29

Sanghera was born in Jalandhar, Punjab and came to Canada with his family in 1979. He went to high school in Surrey and then studied electronics at BCIT before beginning his business career in music production. Sanghera is president of Music Waves, a company that specializes in production and distribution of South Asian contemporary music. He also started the South Asian Broadcasting Company which won a licence for Red-FM, a successful ethnic radio station that has been on the air since 2006. Sanghera is a big supporter of traditional cultural events like bhangra dancing and has raised funds for a number of charities.



DALJIT SINGH SIDHU

Sector: Business

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 36

Sidhu is a founder and longstanding president of the Punjabi Market Association in Vancouver, the first of its kind among Indian communities in the west when it was set up 25 years ago. Sidhu said it was important for other new immigrants to see business successes within their community and to have a social, cultural and economic centre within Vancouver. Sidhu lobbied to get the street signs in the neighbourhood painted in both Punjabi and English and is working to get an historic India Gate built to mark the heritage of the area. Sidhu, who is in the insurance business, ran for city council for the NPA in 1993 and worked in provincial and federal political campaigns. He is also a director of the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.



DAVID SIDOO**Sector:** Business**Origin:** N/A**Years in Canada:** N/A

David Sidoo saved Vancouver's golden-boy chef Rob Feenie's bacon when he was near bankruptcy a few years back. Sidoo and wife Manjy quietly became majority owners of restaurants Lumiere and Feenie's. Last year, Sidoo became a household name in Vancouver when, in a shocking move, he and the famous chef parted company and Feenie stepped off his hard-earned culinary pedestal and walked out of the Lumiere kitchen. Feenie took on the job of top chef position for the Cactus Club chain and there was a revolving door of chefs, cooks and managers at Lumiere and Feenie's. Since then, Sidoo has teamed up with one of New York's top restaurateurs, Daniel Boulud, to open DB Bistro Moderne in the place of Feenie's.

**MOE SIHOTA****Sector:** Media**Origin:** Canada

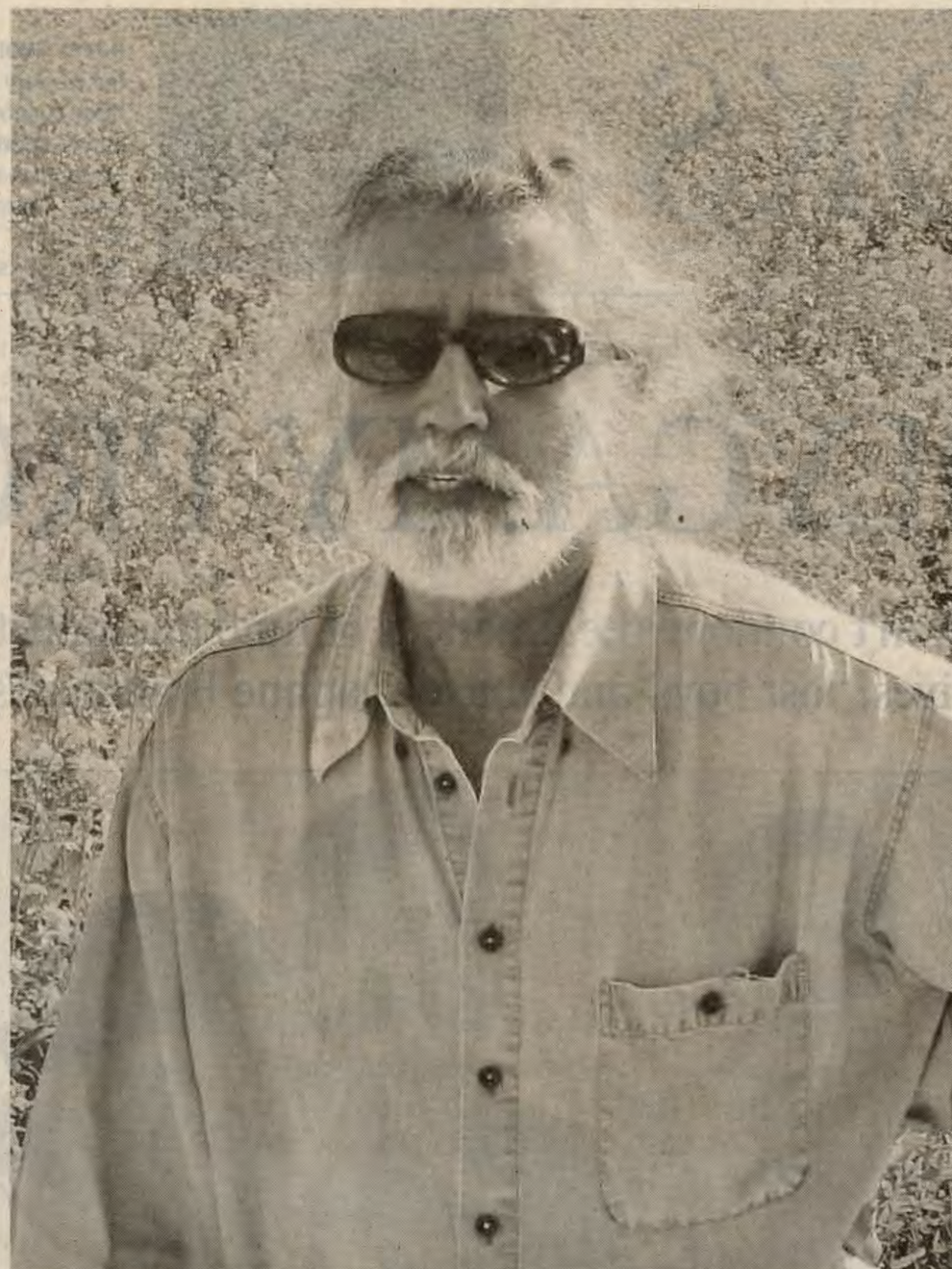
Broadcaster Moe Sihota began his political career while still a student at the University of B.C., serving as ombudsman and later as vice-president of the board of governors. Sihota was active with the New Democratic Party at every level of government, as powerful in the backrooms as he was to become as an alderman and later member of the legislature for Esquimalt. He was the first Indo-Canadian to serve as a cabinet minister for a Canadian province. Since leaving government in 2001, Sihota has worked as a host and moderator on television and radio.

**BOBBY SINGH****Sector:** Sports**Origin:** Fiji**Years in Canada:** 30

Offensive lineman Bobby Singh is Canadian football's king of bling. His jewelry box stores championship rings from three separate pro leagues: the CFL (B.C. Lions, 2006), XFL (Los Angeles Xtreme, 2001) and NFL (St. Louis Rams, 2000). His Punjabi name, Sandeep Singh, translates to "a lion in the sunlight." Living his dream to play for the province's pro football team, Singh was released unexpectedly by the Lions last year. He later signed on with the Calgary Stampeders and commuted to his second job as a Richmond school board trustee while continuing to play in the CFL. Up for re-election in November, he has decided to call it quits after his three-year term ends.

**JARNAIL SINGH****Sector:** Arts**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 8

The multi-talented Surrey resident is known as a photographer, artist, designer and illustrator who special-

**VIC SARIN****Sector:** Arts**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 40

Early in life, Vic Sarin left India with his parents to spend his teen years in Australia. His father, who was a diplomat, was posted there.

Sarin says actor Gordon Pinsent inspired him to come to Canada.

While in Australia, he happened to see Pinsent playing an RCMP officer in a television series. In the background, "I would see all the pine trees and snow-capped mountains and wide open spaces of Canada. I was totally in love with the country," said Sarin, just before boarding a plane from Vancouver to Ireland to make yet another film.

So Sarin moved here in the 1960s and worked for the CBC for 23 years as a director and photographer before striking out on his own in the early 1980s to direct films, first for others, and then through his own company, Sepia Films.

The West Vancouver father of four has been nominated for many awards and has won several. His

latest film, *Partition*, tells the Romeo-and-Juliet style love story of Gian Singh and a Muslim girl named Naseem Khan. It is played out against the background of the turbulent separation between Islamic Pakistan and secular India.

About 75 per cent of the movie was shot in Canada, much of it in B.C.

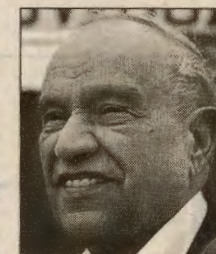
"I have a very strong feeling for Canada," said Sarin. "I think it is one of the most beautiful places on earth. As a cinematographer and director, there is no richer canvas to paint on than this country. It is beautiful geographically. From Halifax to Victoria, you can get anything you want."

Sarin has two joys in life, filmmaking and his children. For the films he has made, "I feel very rich because I think they have substance and I am very proud of them. They are something my kids will be able to watch years from now and say, 'My dad did this.'"

peak in an enviable career in technology. As chairman and formerly the CEO of technology company Xantrex, Umedaly grew the company from \$10 million a year to \$230 million a year in revenue through market growth and aggressive acquisitions. The former executive with fuel-cell developer Ballard Power Systems has also worked on humanitarian projects in the developing world with the Aga Khan.

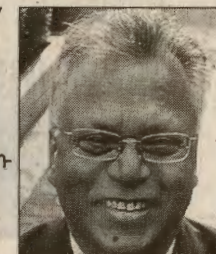
JACK UPPAL**Sector:** Business**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 82

Uppal is one of the most recognized figures in the South Asian community. This pioneer, community leader and successful businessman arrived as an infant in 1926, brought over by his pioneer father Dalip Singh, who moved to B.C. in 1907. Uppal was one of the first Sikh children in a Vancouver public school. Uppal has served on the executive of the Khalsa Diwan Society, which now runs Vancouver's Ross Street temple. Like his community, Uppal's business, Goldwood Industries, has also prospered. Uppal has always given back, hiring new immigrants and sponsoring others who needed a job before being allowed to come to Canada.

**HARI B. VARSHNEY****Sector:** Business**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 41

A promoter, chartered accountant and partner at Varshney Capital Corp., Varshney has been involved in the venture capital business since 1985.

The business career centre at the University of B.C.'s Sauder School of Business bears his name, thanks to a \$1-million donation which was part of a \$65-million redevelopment and expansion for the school. All three of his and his wife Madhu Varshney's children are alumni of the Sauder School. The family has donated more than \$300,000 to the Centre for India and South Asia Research, the Hari and Madhu Varshney Lecture Series and other scholarship funds at UBC as well as participating in other community charities.

**VIKRAM VIJ****Sector:** Business**Origin:** India**Years in Canada:** 18

No serious foodie — or celebrity, for that matter — comes to Vancouver without visiting Vij's, the dazzling Indian restaurant that helps put the city on the international gastronomic map. Vikram Vij and wife Meeru Dhalwala offer food that is Indian through and through but ever so refined, with discerning taste and style. "Easily among the finest Indian restaurants in the world," the *New York Times* gushed. They've made their food more accessible by opening the more casual Rangoli next door, and publishing a cookbook, *Vij's: Elegant and Inspired Indian Food*, an inspiration for many home cooks.



izes in painting historic events and cultural traditions within Sikhism. He was born at Zira, Punjab and immigrated to Canada in 2000, where he immersed himself in the local arts community. One of Singh's highest-profile works is a mural painted in 2006 on the side of a seniors' housing complex in Surrey commemorating the *Komagata Maru* incident. The painting, about 3.5 metres by 6.7 metres, reproduces a famous photograph of the 376 would-be immigrants from India who were not allowed to disembark when their ship landed in Vancouver in 1914.

KAMILLA SINGH

Sector: Community

Origin: Fiji

Years in Canada: 35

Kamilla Singh is a volunteer, counsellor, TV producer, activist and tireless campaigner. She is best known as a spokeswoman for Women Against Violence Against Women, where she has worked as a counsellor since 1993, supporting women escaping violence in their homes or in their home countries. Since 1998, Singh has produced the Shaw Cable television program *Asian Pulse*, which chronicles the immigrant experience in Canada with an activist eye.



VIJAY SONDHI

Sector: Business

Origin: Kenya

Years in Canada: 36

Technology executive Vijay Sondhi joined the Vancouver-based firm Xenon Pharmaceuticals in December 2004 as chief financial officer, following 16 years with high-technology firms in Europe and the United States. The University of B.C. computing science grad obtained an MBA from Columbia University in New York before embarking on a career that included helping lead the firm IXOS Software AG to an initial public offering, serving as CFO of the firm Fidelio Software GmbH where he assisted in the company's sale and venture partner with Warburg Pincus in Europe.



ASHWIN SOOD

Sector: Arts

Origin: England

Years in Canada: 30+

Ashwin Sood, 40, is primarily known for being Sarah McLachlan's husband, but he is also a talented musician and producer in his own right. He and McLachlan met when he was the drummer in her band and the couple now makes music together out of their West Vancouver home studio. They have two children together. Sood recently signed on to be the primary talent scout for a new joint venture between Netwerk Music Group and LiveNation. He travels regularly, seeking new artists that he can help to develop. Sood was born in England on Sept 25, 1967, but spent most of his childhood in Calgary.



RATANA STEPHENS

Sector: Business

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 39

Ratana Stephens founded Nature's Path Foods of Delta with her husband Arran as a whole-foods restaurant in 1967. Today Nature's Path is the largest organic breakfast food firm in North America and remains independently owned and operated by the Stephens. The company has won a number of industry honours and was named one of the *MacLean's Magazine's* top 20 employers in 2005. "The heart and soul of the company," Ratana is the creative force behind the Nature's Path product line. The Stephens also facilitated the development of the SOS Eco Centre in Richmond, which teaches sustainable land stewardship and organic gardening. Their EnviroKidz Organic label donates a portion of proceeds to reclaim endangered environments and species.



JET SUNNER

Sector: Law

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 32

While stationed in Richmond, this long-time RCMP officer founded Team Izzat in 2004 to keep youth on the straight and narrow and steer them away from gangs. And he wanted to challenge the negative image of young people in the media as gang-bangers. Izzat means honour and respect in Punjabi and the team of police and community volunteers practice what they preach, offering mentorship programs and providing scholarships to young people displaying leadership skills. Sunner has been organizing annual sports tournaments and other events for youth. Team Izzat is now working on a long-term project with Surrey teens who want to survey their peers for possible solutions to gang and drug problems. Sunner is currently a sergeant working out of E Division headquarters.



ITRATH SYED

Sector: Education

Origin: Pakistan

Years in Canada: 35

Born in Pakistan but raised in Metro Vancouver from age two, Syed is a dynamic scholar, feminist, activist and public intellectual. She teaches women's studies at Langara College and is a research associate at the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies at the University of B.C. As a Sunni Muslim who wears a hijab, Syed once ran for federal office for the New Democratic Party, upsetting some conservatives in her religious community for joining a party that supports gay and lesbian rights. This year, Syed, who is often sought by the secular media to explain Muslim issues, was instrumental in bringing her friend, Zarqa Nawaz, creator of *Little Mosque on*



the Prairie, to Vancouver for a speaking engagement. Nawaz's talk coincided with a series of lectures Syed organized through St. John's College on contemporary issues affecting Muslims.

SULTAN THIARA

Sector: Business

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 40

Sultan Thiara is co-owner of the major junior hockey team Vancouver Giants, winners of the 2007 Memorial Cup. A graduate of UBC's commerce program, Thiara first worked as a chartered accountant before joining the management of Shato Holdings, which owns and operates B.C.'s legendary White Spot restaurants. Thiara also serves as a trustee for the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame, is a member of the Council of Strategy and Development for the Conference Board of Canada and a board member for B.C. Children's Hospital, in addition to chairing the charity fund-raiser Duffers' Golf Tournament.



HARJINDER THIND

Sector: Media

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 29

A well-known talk show host and producer on Red-FM, Thind is a leader in shaping opinion in the South Asian community through his thoughtful commentary. He has also become known for his volunteer work with a number of local and international organizations. Thind is proud of his heritage and considers himself an ambassador who works to preserve the Punjabi language and culture while providing a critical bridge between the Punjabi and mainstream cultures.



SUNERA THOBANI

Sector: Education

Origin: Tanzania

Years in Canada: 19

UBC Women's Studies professor Sunera Thobani burst into national view when she became the first woman of colour to be elected president of the National Action Committee of the Status of Women and she made anti-racism the central theme of her tenure as president. She is a prodigious writer for academic journals on the subjects of globalization and race and gender relations.



MOSSADIQ UMEDALY

Sector: Business

Origin: Uganda

Years in Canada: 30

Mossadiq Umedaly was appointed last year chairman of BC Hydro, the latest



KARIM VIRANI

Sector: Community

Origin: Uganda

Years in Canada: 32

Realtor Karim Virani casts a long shadow over Vancouver and around the world as the founder of Virani Real Estate Advisors. Born in Uganda, Varani moved to the U.K. and then to Vancouver, where he graduated from Windsor secondary. He started as a real estate agent in England, but returned to Vancouver in time for the post-Expo real estate boom. He was recognized as a top-one-per-cent realtor from 1994 on.



AMRIK VIRK

Sector: Law

Origin: India

Years in Canada: 39

Virk was one of the first South Asians ever to rise to the rank of inspector within the RCMP. He now holds a senior position in Langley, after years with Surrey RCMP and a long stint stationed in Alberta. He has taken a leadership role on the issue of gang violence, working within the Indo-Canadian community to educate families about the risks their teens face if lured into the gangster lifestyle. He is also on the board of the Surrey Memorial Hospital Foundation and on Simon Fraser University Community Outreach and Engagement-Continuing Studies Advisory Group.



HARSHA WALIA

Sector: Community

Origin: Bahrain

Years in Canada: 10

Born in Bahrain, Walia grew up in Delhi and other points throughout the Middle East. She lived briefly in the eastern U.S. before moving to Canada. An organizer for the political left and women's movements, Walia has distinguished herself by her commentaries in the left-wing publications and the local press. She is a researcher for West Coast LEAF, a women's legal education and advocacy group. Walia has most recently been a leader in the fight to keep paralysed refugee claimant Laila Singh from being deported to India with the group No One is Illegal.



Profiles written by Randy Shore, Kim Bolan, Douglas Todd, Fiona Anderson, Joanne Lee-Young, Derrick Penner, Marke Andrews, Lyndon Little, Mike Beamish, Mia Stainsby, Amy O'Brien, Kevin Griffin and Yvonne Zacharias

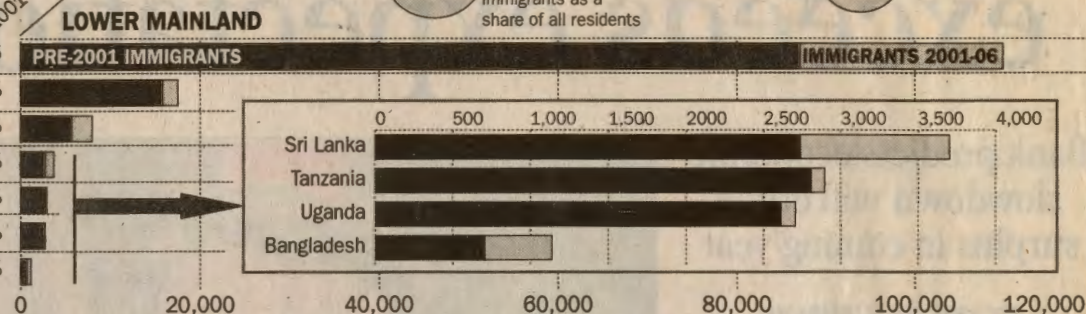
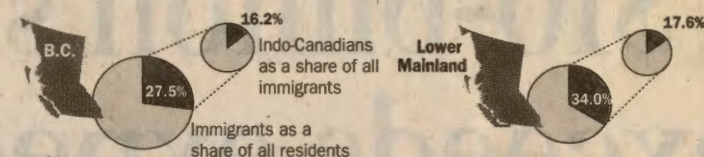
POPULATION SNAPSHOT: Indo-Canadian immigrants in the community

Data from
Canada's 2006
census

	LOWER MAINLAND						BRITISH COLUMBIA					
	Total immigrant population	% of all immigrants	% of IndoCdn immigrants	% of all residents	# of 2001-06 immigrants	% of all 2001-06 immigs.	Total immigrant population	% of all immigrants	% of IndoCdn immigrants	% of all residents	# of 2001-06 immigrants	% of all 2001-06 immigs.
India	109,870	11.3%	75.4%	3.8%	22,735	13.6%	119,265	10.7%	76.4%	2.9%	23,990	13.5%
Fiji	17,525	1.8%	12.0%	0.6%	1,680	1.0%	17,870	1.6%	11.4%	0.4%	1,750	1.0%
Pakistan	7,975	0.8%	5.5%	0.3%	2,265	1.4%	8,200	0.7%	5.3%	0.2%	2,325	1.3%
Sri Lanka	3,700	0.4%	2.5%	0.1%	965	0.6%	3,825	0.3%	2.4%	0.1%	980	0.6%
Tanzania*	2,895	0.3%	2.0%	0.1%	90	0.1%	3,010	0.3%	1.9%	0.1%	95	0.1%
Uganda*	2,705	0.3%	1.9%	0.1%	95	0.1%	2,815	0.3%	1.8%	0.1%	90	0.1%
Bangladesh	1,135	0.1%	0.8%	0.0%	430	0.3%	1,185	0.1%	0.8%	0.0%	430	0.2%
Total	145,805						156,170					

*Substantial numbers of Indo-Canadians emigrated from these countries, although the numbers may also include ethnic Africans.

Source: Statistics Canada



A COMMUNITY OF INFLUENCE

Through years of struggle, Indo-Canadians opened the door to B.C. for future generations

BY RANDY SHORE and KIM BOLAN
VANCOUVER SUN

Looking back over the 82 years since he arrived in B.C. from Punjab, India, Jack Uppal is amazed at his community.

"Never in my wildest dreams would I ever have expected to have this many of our people here and doing so well. I never would have expected this at all," the successful Vancouver businessman and community leader said this month.

Just a baby when he and family joined patriarch Dalip Singh here in 1926, Uppal remembers how difficult some of the early years in Canada were.

THE VANCOUVER SUN
online

vancouversun.com

Sound off

The Vancouver Sun would like to hear your thoughts on our list of 100 Influential South Asians in British Columbia. To voice your opinion go on line to: www.vancouversun.com/influential

South Asians were denied the right to vote. It was almost impossible to sponsor relatives to come to Canada.

But there were opportunities galore and community members made sure they capitalized on them with hard work and ingenuity.

Uppal owns Goldwood Industries, a lumber company in south Vancouver. He thinks he has probably helped "thousands and thousands" of other Indians immigrate to B.C. by offering them employment and sponsorship.

"Every morning, I get up and I first thank God and then I thank my dad for coming out here and having me and my brother and my mother come out here to have the opportunity to live in such a wonderful place like Vancouver. And we have had the opportunity to prosper. It wouldn't have happened in any other country."

But it was not always easy.

The first South Asians to lay eyes on this province were the officers of a multi-ethnic contingent of the British army on their way to celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee.

The loyal Sikh regiment was a favourite of Queen Victoria and frequently travelled throughout the colonies, according to historian Satwinder Bains, of University College of the Fraser Valley.

What those officers saw in 1897 was a vast land bristling with virgin timber, sparsely populated — a land of unimaginable riches.

A handful of years later some of those officers were back as settlers, as were many of their family and friends, who they had regaled with stories of the potential of this new world frontier.

"The first settlers to arrive in B.C. in 1903 had a very good reception," Bains said.

The earliest Sikh community in B.C. was founded in Vancouver, but within a few years, there were settlements dotted along the Fraser River and as far inland as Golden. Some moved to Vancouver Island. Mayo Singh, who became a successful mill owner, founded Paldi, a small community near Duncan, naming it after his village in Punjab.

Many of the pioneers settled in Victoria and prospered there. At one point the Indian community in the capital was the same size as that in Vancouver. By 1906, the new immigrants had banded together to form the Khalsa Diwan Society to look after their cultural, religious and



IAN SMITH/VANCOUVER SUN

Sikh pioneer Jack Uppal, 83, arrived in Canada in 1926 with his mother to join his father. He owns a Vancouver lumber company and helps Indians immigrate to B.C. by offering them employment and sponsorship.

political needs. The society bought land at 1866 West Second Ave. in Kitsilano and opened the first temple, or *gurdwara*, in 1907. Newly arrived men could stay there for free while they searched for work in sawmills.

In virtually any place in B.C. there was a mill, and there were Indian immigrants working in and around it.

Only 45 settlers came from India in the first full year of immigration to B.C. starting in 1904. The following year 387 arrived, followed by another 2,384 Indian immigrants the next year. The city of Vancouver had fewer than 6,000 registered voters at that time. The influx of South Asian settlers was dubbed a "flood," said Bains.

In 1908 the local Caucasian settlers had seen enough and pressured the government to pass the first of a series of laws restricting migration from India.

The Continuous Journey Regulation was passed in 1908, requiring that all would-be immigrants arrive from their homeland by direct passage. Since no ships offered such service between South Asia and Canada, it had the effect of eliminating immigration from the subcontinent.

The continuous passage law directly precipitated one of the blackest incidents in Canadian history, the refusal of immigrants aboard the *Komagata Maru*.

In 1858, Queen Victoria had declared that Indians would enjoy all the rights and privileges afforded to citizens of the British Empire, and Singaporean Sikh businessman Gurdit Singh took her at her word. He chartered the Japanese steamer *Komagata Maru* and arrived in Vancouver with 376 passengers, many of them veterans of the British army from the Punjab, on May 23, 1914.

They were refused entry and the Canadian government summoned a battleship to back its position.

The Khalsa Diwan Society formed the "shore committee" to provide food and water to those aboard the ship and to try to fight politically and

WEEKEND EXTRA

PROFILES OF THE 100 Start on D1

legally on behalf of the would-be immigrants. But after almost two months at an impasse, those aboard were forced to return to India.

The immigration door, which had only been open a crack, slammed tight to South Asians who could not even bring their wives and children to Canada. Immigration slowed to a trickle of about a dozen men per year through the 1920s, forming bachelor communities throughout B.C.

Some went back to India. But many more persevered and made B.C. their home.

"That first decade was tumultuous," understated Bains. But it was tumultuous for everyone. Chinese immigrants faced similar indignities at the hands of government and sometimes racist mobs.

The South Asian community fought back. Through the Khalsa Diwan Society and some political allies, they organized lobbying trips to Ottawa. Everyone in the community would pitch in money to help.

Uppal remembers his dad and other community leaders being part of those early battles for immigration rights. "Don't forget, there was no person who was not a son or a daughter of a legally entered Canadian into Canada up until 1950. That's when the first people started to come over in the quota. So when the quota came, it was 50 a year," Uppal said.

"And even when it came to increasing the quota from 50 to 150, I was at the forefront. We used to write quite a brief, for instance. I would write it and they would take it to Ottawa and present it to the government at the time. Having friends in all three political parties also helped me."

Indo-Canadians were also looking for voting rights. Uppal was called in 1947 to fight in the Second World War for a country that would not let him vote. He had to report to the army camp at Oakridge on 49th Avenue.

"I had told the senior officer that if we don't have the right to vote, we shouldn't be called and he said, 'You are quite right. Your community has been fighting quite hard on this issue,'" Uppal recalled. "I said I would be proud to go if I was a first-class citizen like everyone else. I would be proud to go. But it didn't happen."

It would be decades before the most discriminatory practices of government were lifted. Indians in Canada were granted the right to vote in 1947 and immigration laws finally relaxed in the 1970s.

The result was a renewed enthusiasm for Canada on the subcontinent. In-migration from India immediately vaulted into the tens of thousands per year and settled to about 25,000 people annually right through the turn of the century.

The linguistic and religious mix of today's South Asian community owes much to the "chain migration" strategy employed by the early Punjabi settlers. Most of the early settlers were Sikhs and they in turn brought their family members and so on, building their families and communities in Canada link by link.

While the vast majority of South Asians residing today in B.C. are Punjabi Sikhs, the Hindu community has grown from a few dozen in the early 1900s to about 100,000 today. Similarly, Muslims of South Asian origin number just over 90,000.

Ugandan dictator Idi Amin's reign of terror during the 1970s prompted

about 50,000 South Asian residents in that east African nation to flee. But the government of India barred the Ugandan Ismaili population from returning to the motherland.

It was only through the intervention of the Aga Khan, the leader of the Ugandan Ismaili community, and then-Canadian prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau that tens of thousands of Ugandan Indians were given passage to Canada.

Political upheaval and migration is a recurring theme in the migration of South Asians to B.C., and it was sectarian violence abroad that fuelled the growth of the local Sri Lankan community. Every country with a significant South Asian community — Fiji, Uganda, Hong Kong and others — has supplied B.C. with another unique facet through immigration.

The result is a wildly diverse group of communities that are as culturally insular — prizing their unique traditions, languages and religious affiliations — as they are confidently and robustly participatory in public life.

South Asians have really shared B.C., said Uppal, who has been a constant observer for eight decades.

"We have helped to build the province of British Columbia, there is no question about it," Uppal said. "I am quite proud of the fact that our people have done so well in every field, almost — but particularly in politics. Here we didn't even have the right to vote and now our people are making the laws."

"I was so proud of Wally Oppal becoming a judge and now of course he is attorney-general. And Herb Dhaliwal and Ujjal Dosanjh and all these others who have done so fantastically well. We have done a lot of good work and for that I am very, very happy."

It is from this perspective that *The Sun* undertook to identify 100 leading citizens from a truly global mosaic of communities hailing from South Asia. Diversity and inclusiveness are the dual tracks of this list.

From hundreds of names taken from the panoply of South Asian leaders, academics, community workers, artists, journalists, thinkers, speakers and doers, we have crafted a list of influential men and women in British Columbian society.

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