

BRIDAL DREAMS, C2
FINANCIAL FOCUS, C4

WEEKENDER

THE ABBOTSFORD NEWS

Indo-Canadian heritage featured at MSA Museum

Abbotsford's forgotten pioneers

by JANET VICKERS
MSA Museum

SUNDER SINGH was one of the first Sikh farmers to establish himself in Abbotsford.

He was the only son and first of his family to leave India and his village of Daulatpur, Punjab in search of better conditions.

He arrived in British Columbia in 1906, not knowing where he would stay or where his next meal would come from.

He first worked for the Abbotsford Lumber Company; then later began a large scale dairy farm on land reclaimed from Sumas Lake (mostly swampland) near Whatcom Road, which he bought in 1942 for a dollar to a dollar and a half per acre. By 1953 he had 50 milking cows, potatoes, raspberries and strawberries and three hundred acres.

Devoted to his religion he participated in the building of the first Sikh Temple in 1911 and later donated his share of land, along with Karm Singh and Harry Singh, for a bigger Gurdwara across the street.

Sunder was known by a few different names - Joe, Joe the Hindu, Bossi (an endearment of Boss during his foreman years at the mill).

His wife, Harnam Kaur (also known as Mahendar Kaur) donated the wooden Nishan Sahib (pole) that stood in front of the original Gurdwara.

Sunder was highly regarded by the Sikh community throughout British Columbia as well as the community at large in Abbotsford.

Unique lives

■ Fifteen-year-old Mangle Singh Gill arrived in B.C. in 1906.

He was from the village Dhanpind in the Punjab. He worked building rail-



PHOTO COURTESY MSA MUSEUM

Rajnesh (Rick) Singh Gill (far right) says that growing up in an extended family provides a link to his ancestors, culture and religion - but most of all has shown him strength of family. Both his father and grandfather were born in the village Dudhike, Punjab. Both became Canadian citizens as soon as

■ A plague swept through the village that Ran Singh grew up in, taking the lives of his father, brothers and sisters. He boarded a Japanese cargo ship as a

the law allowed in 1947. Indar Singh Gill says Canada is his country, India is his ancestry. His son was given Canadian citizenship at birth since he was born when his father was back in India to bring his wife home to Canada in 1947. A display of Indo-Canadian heritage is currently set up at MSA

Diwan Society in Vancouver; the government ordered the Navy cruiser Rainbow to forcibly escort the Komacata Maru

to 5 p.m., and today from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. for a special open house.

For further information call 853-0313.