

Bachan Kaur Alamwala

Bachan Kaur Alamwala grew up in village Chupkitri, near Moga. She got married in 1948 in India and her husband came to Canada in 1949. She first came to Canada in 1960 along with her 11-year-old daughter Surinder and 6-year-old son Jasvir. Upon her arrival the family settled down in Lake Cowichan with another family.

Bachan Kaur gave birth to two more children in Canada, Avtar and Jagtar who were born in Duncan Hospital. Bachan Kaur first went back to India after 15 years for four months along with her youngest son Jagtar to get her oldest son Jasvir married.

Bachan's husband was born in Canada, but the family moved back to India when he was only 5 years old as his mother got asthma. He returned back after 17 years in 1949 after getting married. Bachan Kaur Alamwala's husband worked at the mill in Honeymoon Bay making \$400 a month or \$8 an hour. When Bachan first came she thought Canada was a beautiful country. She recalls that most of the people that lived in her community were Indians and they all worked in mills. Later in 1968 the family bought a 10-acre farm in Abbotsford and moved there. During this time her husband still worked in Squamish and visited home on the weekends. He worked there for about 4-5 years. While her kids went to school, Bachan Kaur got a job at the Cannery, which was owned by a white man named Matt. Bachan's pay at the cannery was \$1 an hour, but she quit after working for two years only to start working at her own farm.

When Bachan first came to Canada she wore suits, but she started wearing dresses and pants in Lake Cowichan as there were white people there. When Bachan visited the Gurdwara she preferred wearing traditional suits. However the visits to the gurdwara were not regular, as the family did not own a car and the Gurdawara was distantly located so they couldn't walk there.

The family did their grocery shopping at stores like Funks store, Super Value, and Co-op. After collecting the needed grocery items at the store they would put it in a tab and the storeowner would drop off the groceries at the listed address. However if the store was close by they would just walk to it to buy groceries. The groceries cost the family about \$100- \$150 a month.

After being in Canada for 6 years Bachan Kaur sponsored her maiden family. The law at that time allowed a person to sponsor his/her siblings as well. Her brother was a teacher so he was able to apply himself on the basis of his education. Bachan Kaur Alamwala first sponsored her brother Mehr Singh and then her nephews in 1967.