

Mohinder Singh Gill (Moe Gill)

Interviewer- can I start off with your full name please ?

Mohinder- yes, my full name is Mohinder Singh Gill

Interviewer- and Mr. Gill what is your date of birth?

Mohinder- November 12th 1943.

Interviewer- and how long have you been in Canada for?

Mohinder we arrived in Canada on October 1955.

Interviewer- and when you arrived were u by yourself?

Mohinder no, I came as a young boy with my mother and my younger sister

Interviewer- and who did you come to when you arrived in Canada

Mohinder- my dad was here four years before we arrived

Interviewer- what was his name?

Mohinder- Major S. Gill

Interviewer- who did your father come to when he arrived in Canada

Mohinder- originally my grandfather came to Canada in 1923, to go to the university of UBC, as a student.

Interviewer- what was his name?

Mohinder- Puran S. Gill. He was one of the two students that arrived in Canada that were given permission to come and participate and take courses at the university.

Interviewer- do you know what he was studying?

Mohinder- he was studying business and administration

Interviewer- so do you know when Puran Singh came to Canada, if he came by himself?

Mohinder- he came under the student VISA

Interviewer- so did he end up completing his education here?

Mohinder- no because the funding was cut off either a year and a half or two years

Interviewer- do you know why it was cut off?

Mohinder- he didn't have enough funding back home because there was nobody else and money ran out

Interviewer- do you know roughly how much his education as costing him at that point?

Mohinder- I have no clue what his education was costing him

Interviewer- so when he came out of school did he return back to India or stay in Canada?

Mohinder- he went back to India about 3 or 4 times but his home was in Canada

Interviewer- did he stay in Vancouver then?

Mohinder- he stayed in Vancouver at that time but after leaving university he was in Alberta for a little while, he was on the island for a little while, he was out of country for a while.

Interviewer- just working I would assume?

Mohinder- just working wherever he could find work.

Interviewer- so then did your grandmother ever come to Canada?

Mohinder- my grandmother arrived in Canada in 1950 along with my three uncles.

Interviewer- what was her name?

Mohinder- her name was...Prem Kaur.

Interviewer- so your three uncles that came with her, were they your dad's brothers?

Mohinder- they were my dad's brothers. My dad is the oldest of four brothers.

Interviewer- so was your father one of those?

Mohinder- no my father was not one of them, he had joined the army in India. Not only he was in the army, he was over the age limit that could travel with a mother.

Interviewer- do you by any chance know when your grandfather, Puran Singh, sponsored your grandmother, what the procedure was?

Mohinder- I wouldn't know. The procedure in those days 1950, you put in an application for your wife and children to arrive to Canada. It was allowable at that time to fill an application.

Interviewer- so assuming your grandfather did he arrive to Canada on a boat?

Mohinder- in those days many of the people did arrive in Canada on a boat. They would arrive in Hongkong, from Hongkong they would arrive in San Francisco, from there they would take the train to Vancouver, that is what my father did so I assume it's what my grandfather did.

Interviewer- so your father actually came about a year or two after your grandmother came?

Mohinder- yes because my grandfather filled the application again for my father and about that time Mr. Nehru made a trip to Canada. Delegation from Vancouver who went to Ottawa, it took them about 5 days to get there on train and they had a meeting with Nehru and had asked Nehru to ask the federal government of Canada, they have had the application of 52 people with the immigration department to release those 52 applications and give the immigration to those 52 and allow them to come to Canada.

Interviewer- and your father...

Mohinder- my father was one of them.

Interviewer- when your father arrived to Canada, where was your grandfather and the family settled then?

Mohinder- I understand my father when arrived in Canada they were all living in New Westminster.

Interviewer- so by the time your father arrived, it would have been your grandfather, grandmother, three uncles and your father.

Mohinder- yea they were the ones that were in Canada

Interviewer- what are your three uncles names?

Mohinder- one is Takur, Harnek, and Modhun. They are all still alive, except for my dad.

Interviewer- and back home in India, what is your village or what part of India?

Mohinder- well we are from village of Chunnanval

Interviewer- and where is that located

Mohinder- well that is, it used to be district of Ludhiana, then Barnala, now Sangroor I think.

Interviewer- so when you arrived in Canada with your mother and your sister, was there anyone from your immediate family left in India at that point?

Mohinder- well from my mother's side, yes, and from my father's side his other cousins, his uncle and aunt they were all left.

Interviewer- when you arrived in Canada, at the mere age of, you must have been 9...

Mohinder- about 11

Interviewer- what was your first impression of this country?

Mohinder- well when you're a kid there's no version of a country. All you know is that you're with your family and that's basically all it was

Interviewer- and when you arrived did you come to Vancouver airport?

Mohinder- when we arrived we caught an American flight from Calcutta and came through Hawaii, I remember staying at a hotel in Hawaii, then we came directly to Vancouver

Interviewer- from Hawaii to Vancouver?

Mohinder- yes

Interviewer- stepping of the plane, anything was it cold?

Mohinder- no I don't think it was cold that time, October wasn't that cold. I don't recall anything very much. Just came off the plane and maybe saw my dad.

Interviewer- and how long had it been since you had seen your father?

Mohinder- well my father came to Canada in 1952

Interviewer- and before that he was in the army

Mohinder- yea and before that he was in the army but in the army they come home all the time. Then we were living in our village of Chunnanval, then when dad come over, we moved back to my mother's village, Buttar, and we stayed there until we arrived in Canada.

Interviewer- so when you arrived in Canada, where was your family residing then?

Mohinder- by that time, my father had built a house in mission and on a flat, still there. And we arrived in my grandfather's house and the same time my father had purchased another house on Gladys, two blocks away. And a couple of days later, we went to our house.

Interviewer- so then was the Gladys house rented out?

Mohinder- where?

Interviewer- the one that was two blocks away?

Mohinder- that was my grandfather's house

Interviewer- in New West still?

Mohinder- no in Mission.

Interviewer- so the whole family had moved to Mission?

Mohinder- the whole family had moved to Mission.

Interviewer- do you know when they moved to Mission?

Mohinder- it was probably around that time, in 1954, something like that.

Interviewer- do you know why they moved to Mission?

Mohinder- because grandfather got a job out here, dad was working out. Actually dad was working out here for Paul Dhaliwal

Interviewer- in trucking

Mohinder- not trucking, he was working, Paul had a contract in the sawmill.

Interviewer- and what did your grandfather do?

Mohinder- my grandfather worked in the sawmill

Interviewer- so after he stopped going to school at UBC he got into sawmill

Mohinder- basically he didn't get his degree in it so he can go into the profession of business administration, and he just became a general labourer.

Interviewer- since he did go to school he must have known a little more English than

Mohinder- oh yes, his biggest hobby was reading the paper every day and he always told me to learn one word of English everyday. One new word.

Interviewer- so you must have been excited being here with your grandfather, and your father and the whole family

Mohinder- there was the whole family because at that time my youngest uncle, who is about 4-5 years older than I am, he was going to school. Then when I left the elementary school to go to junior school, we walked back together.

Interviewer- so you said your sister also came

Mohinder- my sister came with, she's four years younger than I am

Interviewer- and what is her name?

Mohinder- Surjit. Then my other sister was born in 1956 in Mission hospital, Amar.

Interviewer- so when you arrived in Mission, were you enrolled in school right away?

Mohinder- yes

Interviewer- and when you came in Mission, were there quite a few Indian families already?

Mohinder- no, I was in grade 5 in India, they enrolled us back to grade two. There was another young person from India as well, from Kashmir, him and I were put in grade 2 along with Nash-Nachittar Gill. And Nachittar was supposed to translate the English language into Punjabi for us, unfortunately he didn't know any Punjabi either.

Interviewer- oh he didn't know any Punjabi ?

Mohinder- yea you interviewed him, Nachittar already, Nash Gill the lawyer, he didn't know much Punjabi. So as youngsters we used to go over to his place and play with him, and that was it. I used to play with other kids, I didn't no any English, the first game I ever played was baseball. Because I happened to walk up to the playground, you know where the playground in Mission is, on 7th Avenue. The team was one person short so they grabbed me and made me stand in the field, and I was in a baseball game.

Interviewer- so that team, that game that you were playing, was that just Indian children or was it a mixture?

Mohinder- no we had 6 Indian boys plus two girls in school period at that time. There weren't that many Indian kids at that time.

Interviewer- so the game that you played with, were you playing with?

Mohinder- yea the white kids, I was the only Indo-Canadian kid there of that age.

I-so then you finished elementary in mission then went to high school in Mission?

Mohinder- then I went into high school. I didn't complete my high school, I left before

Interviewer- why?

Mohinder- because I got a little sick and I was coughing all the time. The doctor couldn't find out what was wrong, then finally he found me a medicine and gave it to me, then next day it was fine

Interviewer- so did you ever find out what it was?

Mohinder- no, never found out and then my parents, my mom wanted me to go to university to study. When your coughing all the time in class, you can't study. And then I said, well the family said, now, certain time in history you gotta get all the education, certain times you don't need all the education and you go fit into the work force because that's where the income is and you could just build yourself up that way as well. So I went into the work force.

Interviewer- so what grade did you complete up to?

G-grade 11, and I finished my grade 11 with the correspondence. I still didn't wanna leave school and take up the correspondence. And, then finally they said you don't need the correspondence.

Interviewer- so then when you entered the work force, what was your job?

Mohinder- it was regular saw mill. I worked for Harman Sawmill at first as a stand appointment, stack boy. Entering all the numbers.

Interviewer- and do you remember how much you were getting paid?

Mohinder- yes I was getting paid \$0.90 an hour

Interviewer- and were you...

Mohinder- then I got a raise to \$1.10 after a little while

Interviewer- and did you, at the Harman Sawmill, remain the stand appointment?

Mohinder- yes I was there for about two years

Interviewer- this is after you completed your grade eleven?

Mohinder- yes

Interviewer- and at the time, when you were in school, did you hold any jobs while you were in school at all?

Mohinder- no

Interviewer- then your sisters must have gone to Mission school?

Mohinder- yes my sisters went to school, one is working in a government office in Vancouver and the other one in Surrey. And my younger sister was born here so as she grew up she went to school from Grade 1.

Interviewer- and did they graduate from high school?

Mohinder- yes they graduated

Interviewer- so after two years at Harman Sawmill, what did you do then?

Mohinder- well after that I went to work in a Whonnak lumber company

Interviewer- and how long were you there for?

Mohinder- for Whonnak Company I worked for 12 years.

Interviewer- and that was for?

Mohinder- Whonnak

Interviewer- and where were they located?

Mohinder- they were located between Maple Ridge, at Lougheed Highway, before the Albion Ferry, on the river side, they are not there now

Interviewer- so then, since it was a little ways away, when did you learn to drive?

Mohinder- oh in those days, you learn to drive very young, you hop in the car and run the car around with your neighbours

Interviewer- and when you arrived in Canada, did your family own a car?

Mohinder- me grandfather had a car

Interviewer- and the whole family used that car to kind of...

Mohinder- well in those days the whole family goes into town, Mission is a small town, we lived on a flat area, you want to go anywhere, you walk. And when we moved up on 7th avenue, when you wanted to go to town, you walked down. And, you want to buy groceries, you carry them in your arms, or bags, and when you wanted to go to Vancouver, rarely, you find one of your neighbours like Paul Dhaliwal to give you a lift.

Interviewer- in the truck?

Mohinder- no in car, and sometimes you can take the truck if you have to. Then few of the other people who had cars, they always helped out. Same thing with buying the groceries, you had to go to Vancouver to buy all the groceries you eat in the house.

Interviewer- Indian groceries?

Mohinder- Indian groceries, up on Hastings Street

Interviewer- do you remember when you arrived, what kind of car you had?

Mohinder- yes, my grandfather, I remember the one he bought, a Mercury Meteor, green. No power steering or that. My uncle had a car, we used to take it after school, one time we forgot to take the hand brakes off, during the winter time, we went up got to the fifth hill, from there we couldn't make it any further so just parked the car and walk the rest of the way.

Interviewer- was this the uncle that is only a few years older than you?

Mohinder- yes, Modhun

Interviewer- you guys must have gotten into a lot of trouble together since you were so close in age

Mohinder- no, we would get a lot of spanking if we get into trouble, we didn't get into trouble

Interviewer- after you were at the Whonnak Lumber Company, how long, you said you were there...

Mohinder- 12 years. My dad was working there before I, and my grandfather was working there as well, so when I go from Harman Sawmill, we had a meeting with the one of the foreman, and I asked him if I could have a job there. At that time, the Whonnak lumber company wasn't hiring any Indo-Canadians, because previous to that, one of the Indo-Canadians got into a fight with the super-intendant, and he threw a milk bottle at him, and almost hit him in the face. And the super-intendant was pretty upset, he said he's not going to hire any more Indian people. And, I was the first one to break that rule

Interviewer- so how long was the...

Mohinder- that must have been probably five six years. In those days, when you worked, you always had to compete.

Interviewer- so from then census from other interview that I have done, Mission was a very, kind of a...

Mohinder- Mission was a mill town.

Interviewer- and it was a very immigrant oriented

Mohinder- its, all the people in Mission at that time were living on a flat area next to the river, between the railway tracks and the river, we all had our houses next to each other

Interviewer- besides the one incident at the mill, were there any other tensions with the Indo-Canadian community and the...?

Mohinder- no the community never had the tensions because those days it was different than it is now, you know the post office in Mission, right across from it is a hardware store, that hardware store my dad went to purchase something, he come down from work and go to purchase something, they say 'no you cant come into the store, we are not saying no to you but the way you are', he was dressed in his work clothes. And they asked him, and he came home and changed his clothes, and then they say 'okay you can come in the store'. Maybe the store had a policy that if everyone come in with boots and work clothes, they could muddy up the floor and all that but dad had to come home and change his clothes to go the store.

Interviewer- so there was no discrimination based on...?

Mohinder- there was, I would say that there is always discrimination. It all depends who your friends are.

Interviewer- it was pretty good community where everyone got along

Mohinder- it was a good community, everyone knew everybody. And the other thing you must remember, there weren't that many Indo-Canadians at that time

Interviewer- so the twelve years that you worked at the mill, what did you do? What was your job then?

Mohinder- well I did almost everything at the sawmill except sawing the lumber. I was training as a grader then working as a grader. Basically learned to do all the jobs, I was a quick learner in all the positions.

Interviewer- so 12 years you worked there, what did you do after that?

Mohinder- well 12 years, I believe it was about 12 years, then we purchased the farm in 1975.

Interviewer- and where did you purchase the farm?

Mohinder- in Abbotsford on Huntington road. And right around there, in 1978 or something, I quit the Whonnak lumber company to do just farming.

Interviewer- so the farm, how many acres was it when you purchased it?

Mohinder- it was a 10 acre farm.

Interviewer- and was that purchased by your father?

Mohinder- father and myself together. We were living together and keeping our money in one bank account and not two bank accounts.

Interviewer- do you remember in 1975, how much 10 acres cost you?

Mohinder- \$115 000. It was raspberry farm, not all the acres were planted. There were two or three acres that were not planted. When we purchased it we planted strawberries.

Interviewer- so then when you purchased the 10 acres in Abbotsford, did you move to Abbotsford, or still live in Mission?

Mohinder- no we, about a year, two years later, moved into Abbotsford. Into an older house on a farm. Then, soon as we moved over, we started drew plans to build a new house next door. On the same farm so we had a new house in '78. And we are still residing there.

Interviewer- so did, once you arrived in Canada, when was the first time you went back to India?

Mohinder- I went back to India in 1969 when I got married.

Interviewer- when did you get married?

Mohinder- April 1969.

Interviewer- and who did you get married to?

Mohinder- A girl. Jagdish

Interviewer- what was Jagdish's maiden last name?

Mohinder- Cheema

Interviewer- and how old was she when she got married?

Mohinder- she was just going to turn 20. Or did turn 20.

Interviewer- and how long did you stay in India at that time?

Mohinder- I stayed in India for 4 months.

Interviewer- did your whole family go?

Mohinder- no my mother and I went. We got married in April and we were in India Jan, Feb, March. Right after the marriage, we came back. And Jagdish came, I filled her application back in Canada and in September she arrived in Canada.

Interviewer- of '69?

Mohinder- yes.

Interviewer- so when you went back to India after living here, did it change quite a bit?

Mohinder- well not really. It didn't change that much. It was the same thing as I was a kid.

Didn't find much changes at all, and when I went this time I found changes. No there weren't many changes because we had the motors out there pumping water and they had the bus system. I think the changes over 10 - 20 years is very little.

Interviewer- so in 1969 your wife arrived, and you were still living in Mission right?

Mohinder- yes we were living on 7th avenue. We owned a house on the plant, and then we bought a lot, two lots on the corner of 7th and Thalloid. We built a house, I could say the house was built in 1967 or '68.

Interviewer- and that's the house she came to?

Mohinder- that is the house she came to.

Interviewer- so by the time your wife arrived, who was living at your house?

Mohinder- my younger sister, my mother and father.

Interviewer- your younger sister, had she gotten married at that point?

Mohinder- she was working.

Interviewer- children?

Mohinder- two. One is girl and one boy.

Interviewer- what is your daughter's name?

Mohinder- daughter is Pala, she is a school teacher. At Eugene Reimer School.

Interviewer- and when was she born?

Mohinder- there's a two year difference between. 1976, summer time. And Paul, my son was born in 1974.

Interviewer- and what does he do?

Mohinder- Paul is editing, he's editing, a film editor. He's working with BCTV and a couple of other companies. He lives in Langley with his wife.

Interviewer- so Paul and your daughter were actually born in Abbotsford?

Mohinder- no, Pala and Paul are born in Mission.

Interviewer- cause you moved in '77.

Mohinder- they were both born in the...Amar my sister was born in the old hospital on 5th avenue in Mission in 1956 and Pala and Paul were born in the new hospital.

Interviewer- when was the new hospital built?

Mohinder- it was built, it was a new hospital Pala and Paul was born at, it could be 1970, '68, or '69.

Interviewer- so once you moved to Abbotsford, did you just focus on farming or did you still work at the mill?

Mohinder- my dad kept on working at the mill

Interviewer- and you took over the farming?

Mohinder- and I started working on the farm. The reason for that was, we leased the land around the farm, and the farm got a little too big for one person, my wife to be running.

Interviewer- so all together, how many acres were you manning at that point?

Mohinder- about each year was different. The leased land value sometimes you get more, sometimes a little less. And the day we retired from farming, we were at 68%.

Interviewer- and were they part of the leased ones?

Mohinder- they were part leased and part owned.

Interviewer- so by the time your retired, how many acres did you own?

Mohinder- personally, by the time we retired, we had 40 acres. We had a lot of acres leased then in between we would buy land and sell.

Interviewer- and when did you retire?

Mohinder- oh I retired from farming, almost 5 years ago.

Interviewer- so somewhere along the way of farming, you got into politics.

Mohinder- I got in politics, actually when we were farming, I got involved and in a lot of agricultural associations. And the first one was Cole Crop Growers Association, Cole is cauliflower, broccoli and sprout, they call it Cole because that is the manufacturer of the seeds. So I got involved with the Cole Crop Growers Association which we brought it into the marketing board. Then, I was involved with Strawberry Growers association, then the Raspberry Association, then plus those, I got involved in the Museum and couple of other boards in the city.

Interviewer- and was that just out of pure interest?

Mohinder- well when you get involved in one association as a volunteer, then always look for you to volunteer for another one. Then it just expands.

Interviewer- so you must have been around in Abbotsford for the strikes that happened in the '80s, the labour disputes and all that? The farm workers.

Mohinder- yes I knew the farm workers, when they had a problem with the situation, Charanpaul Gill, I remember him picking berries and all that. And basically, for some it was an issue for the strike, because I never had the issue with the strike. People that worked for me, had no issue with me. Then were always paid on time, paid fully, and treated beautifully and never had any difficulties.

Interviewer- so when you owned, first started out and had the 10 acres, most of it you managed it yourself...

Mohinder- but the managing of the growing of the product was our management, but when you were going to harvest the crop, in those days you didn't have the harvesters, so I would have the people come, I had a picker's cabin built in the back, I would have people come from Williams' Lake, Clearwater, to assist us in harvesting the crop. And, at that time, they would put in 8 weeks, just around the area, little before that, there were a lot of people working at Ted Horse and Mayers farm, and they would work and they would not receive any employment insurance, so Ted Mayers went and they raised the issue with the government and they got the approval for 8 week work in the summer month, you qualify for 8 weeks of employment. So this gave our people, our ladies that were living in Williams' Lake and other places to come out here for 8 weeks so they could draw out another 8 weeks of UI, make a little extra money to buy clothes for themselves or maybe buy some fancy dresses or whatever, so everybody started coming down. And people started helping, basically I would still call it the harvesting farmers, and scooters were out there too, so they would help us and go back and they would get the 8 weeks of employment. But slowly the employment act changed, and it says if you work before in agriculture, you're not allowed to receive any employment insurance. The argument arose that was raised by individuals, was because back, in back east the fisherman also work only two months and they draw the employment and here at the same time, their revenue is far greater than the farm worker's, and why are they not allowed on this side? So the 8 week was valid to the union, so that's how it worked, then it got increased. Then the people still kept on coming out as long as they could and as long as they could work in the farms. And, then we run into a situation where they were able to get a lot of work in their own town, their towns grew and more jobs were created, they didn't have to come out here, and the farmers were put into a synch, in a bind, shortage of labour. So the farmers went out and tried to look for harvesters that would harvest the raspberries. Harvester that could harvest the blueberries, and you may know that strawberries are still picked by hand, but the now the production of strawberries is gone way down, then what it used to be. Therefore, anything that is not mechanically harvested is not going to be grown as much. So that's what they did, and the work shortage even now you probably see that people are filling farm, bringing the Mexicans over, bringing the foreigners workers over, so every four-five-ten years the structure of agriculture changes. Either the work force, or the agriculture itself. So the change brings different issues, different things.

Interviewer- so when you first notice the labour shortage, like what year did you notice that there was a lack?

Mohinder- when we had people coming in and helping us out, then you expand a little bit, you

expand you need more labour, and we need people for hoeing, we couldn't get people for hoeing, in those days we didn't use that much chemical, as we used now, and we would need to hoe the raspberries and strawberries, and then hoe the broccoli that we would plant, and Brussel sprouts. And the people that come over for the summer month, from lets say Williams' Lake, they bring their children with them, then their father would visit them, you know on the weekend come out, drive out and then go back, and then if the children are of school age, they would have to go back to school, so after the season, they would have to go back. Then you need people to harvest the broccoli and Brussel sprouts, which is a late crop, then we were always scrounging around where we were going to get the labour. And that becomes, that is still a big issue in agriculture.

Interviewer- so your children they went to school in Abbotsford then, right?

Mohinder- yes they went to South Popular School. It's on Huntington road, close to our house. Elementary school. And then they went to Abby Senior school. And that's where, our mayor, George Perry was their principal.

Interviewer- it really it a tight knit community.

Mohinder- well this is when we got to know George, and he was always looking after them.

Interviewer- so then when did you actually, when was the first year you ran...

Mohinder- for council? I believe it was 1986.

Interviewer- it was the first year you ran?

Mohinder- yes.

Interviewer- did you win that year?

Mohinder- no

Interviewer- so what prompted you to run?

Mohinder- when your involved in so many associations, in so many areas, and there's always people coming out and saying 'why don't you run for this. Sitting back, we need a person on council, so why don't you run?' And that is when I ran, I ran in 6 times, and the sixth time I won.

Interviewer- and was that, I'm sure you had support from the community.

Mohinder- when I first ran, in the Indo-Canadian community, there were only 200 votes. And, the support did come but at the same time, there were a lot of people that didn't know me. So, and I think it was about, the votes I received weren't that many.

Interviewer- do you remember the first time you ran, in 1986, how many votes you had?

Mohinder- oh, it could be 237, or something like that. Not that many. I have to check the records, maybe more. Then on the year I won, I was number 8 of the totem pole.

Interviewer- so in 1986 was the first time you ran, and you ran 6 times after that. They happen every year rite?

Mohinder- no, election didn't happen every year, what happened was in those years, the election would happen every after two years. And, I believe there were two by elections in those elections. This is what gave me the chance to run so many times in a short amount of time. Now the term is three years.

Interviewer- so what year were you elected?

Mohinder- Mr. Ed Fast and I were elected in 1996. Basically 1995, December, November.

Interviewer- have there been any other Indo-Canadian councillors prior to you?

Mohinder- no I was the first one elected to council here in Abbotsford.

Interviewer- so it must have been a good day for you and your family, after 6 tries.

Mohinder- oh yea, everybody was gung ho out there. Well I wasn't going to try for the sixth

time, but Bill Khangura and some of the other people went up to the house and said, 'you're the only one that is electable, and we're not going to leave until you say yes'. I had put all my papers, put everything away, and throw them out, and I had nothing to go on. No speeches left. I said that's it I'm not going to run anymore, I've tried so many times. So they weren't taking 'no'. So they did campaign big time.

Interviewer- so there was a lot of community involvement in your campaign?

Mohinder- a lot of community involvement. Tons.

Interviewer- so you were saying that the first year in 1986 when you ran, the Indo-Canadians, you had 200 votes.

Mohinder- I think there basically had about 200 votes.

Interviewer- so when you, in 1995, when you actually came into office, do you know how many votes?

Mohinder- we got in with about 6000 votes that time. Maybe basically at that time, there were 3000 votes.

Interviewer- registered voters?

Mohinder- yea, I think 3000 Indo-Canadian registered votes.

Interviewer- and that year you won by about 6000?

Mohinder- well I was the lowest vote. I would have to go back. No I would say the lowest was always, could have been 6, either been 6 or 8, either one.

Interviewer- I look can look at that, I'm sure. Public records.

Mohinder- they would have all the records. Even on the very first one, they may have records, maybe the votes was higher turnout, then what I came to. Those are the things that you don't want to remember, so you just forget it. And some people do remember. We remember year to year, this year we remember. This year we were up to 13000 votes.

Interviewer- so, since 1995, have you been elected every year? Or every election?

Mohinder- yes.

Interviewer- quite an accomplishment.

Mohinder- now it's the fifth term. And we have been increasing our vote turnout.

Interviewer- being a part of the whole political election, must be kind of proud for you that more people are coming out to vote now.

Mohinder- well yes, because ever since I have been elected, I've been doing a lot of PR, a lot of work in the community, as well as the community at large. And, that makes a difference. In 2005, I believe, I went for the NDP position, for Paul Martin. So that gave me bigger exposure.

Interviewer- is your father, your father's not...?

Mohinder- no my mother and father are not alive anymore.

Interviewer- when did your father pass away?

G-my father passed away in 1993.

Interviewer- and your mother.

Mohinder- and my mother passed away after I won the first election.

Interviewer- so, you've the Indo-Canadian community kind of evolve now, for quite some time now, what are your hopes and aspirations now for the future for the community and your family?

Mohinder- well I don't know about my family, they're going to be well off after I'm gone. I don't worry about them anymore. Well, basically, I look at the community to be the, any politician I think would always look at having their community, when we mean 'their' community, we mean the 'whole' community being the best community in Canada, the best

community in BC, best community in the city. And then with your individual side of the community, you wish that they would be flourishing and established in themselves and making the improvement that are needed and being the healthy and mindful and giving rich community. And, in the future, communities that would a wise community, and the wisdom would probably, like to see the wisdom spill over to another community. And the community of the, one of the biggest in wisdom and respect, and with the higher integrity that it's ever had. And that's what you want from your community. And your community to be successful not only in one area, but any other area that they venture into. That's what you want.

Interviewer- from my research, it's amazing to see how the pioneers have laid down the foundation for a lot of those things for us. As have you, an Indo-Canadian councillor.

Mohinder- well I find that one of the biggest things is, that with you, the young generation, that's what I like to call it, is your know, there's one thing they say, my son always says to me, 'I don't see colours'. And the young community doesn't believe in lying, to tell a lie, my issues are even a lot of the issues. And that's where we have a little difficulty with the young generation, and the new generation and the new people that are coming over from India. They not understanding what Canada is all about. And I have, I grew up on telling the truth all the time. Tell is as it is and let them decide, and if you're not going to do something for somebody, say no, don't say yes and lead them on and that's not the way to do it. And, I hope the community in the long run, falls into those categories. And, the other thing is our community does a lot of charity work just to prove themselves, they don't go outside. And they have to learn to go outside in the community. To do charity work, to help out. And, not only will you prove yourself, you'll prove the other along with it. And, your educating people all around you what you're all about. If somebody negative towards you, and you work with the person, before you know it that person's going to be like, 'hey he's not a bad guy'. So that's basically what you'll notice here.

Interviewer- so I will ask you some other questions now. We were talking about, before we were talking about Paul Dhaliwal and pets, did you have any pets growing up here?

Mohinder- no no, I had a pet when I was in India. And, a little dog and one day the dog was left home, and in India, they have the government people come around and they will poison anybody, any animal that they see. Especially they do for dogs and cats. And apparently, they threw a poison and he ate it. Then he died, then I never had a dog after that.

Interviewer- not even when you had a farm?

Mohinder- no, never got a dog on the farm. Not going to look after a dog

Interviewer- what about the first vehicle, what was the first vehicle you bought?

Mohinder- well not what I bought, but what my dad had. He had this Austin, was the name of the car, British made, with five different gears on it. Small Austin, four cylinder.

Interviewer- and what year did he buy that?

Mohinder- that was 1954 Austin. I don't know what year he bought it.

Interviewer- he used to take it to work and he just got his driver's licence, he wasn't that good at driving the car, so he would have, he used to ride with another person, and the person that he was riding with told him that 'I don't have room because I got other riders in my car' and so dad was scrounging around about what to do, so Ted Marris was one the people that was working in the sawmill, well he said 'ok I will drive you' but Ted Marris would park his truck over at the house, and take the Austin car, dad's car, so Ted didn't waste his gas going back and forth and he drove the car for dad. And he did that for at least 8 years I think.

Interviewer- so would come there and park his truck and drive your dad's car, every week.

Mohinder- yes, because Ted was living in Dewdney, he would come from Dewdney, on the Lougheed highway, come over to the house, park the truck, drive the car to work. Or sometimes, dad would drive it out to the main street and he would park his truck over there.

Interviewer- so winding down in the interview now, your family has expanded, grandchildren, got any?

Mohinder- yes, got a few, Paula got two boys, and Paul got a boy and girl.

Interviewer- and you were saying Paul lives in Langley?

Mohinder- Paul's in Langley.

Interviewer- and Paula, is she in Abbotsford?

Mohinder- she's in Abbotsford.

Interviewer- and you still live on the farm on Huntington Road?

Mohinder- still live on Huntington Road.

Interviewer- so when you and your family moved to Huntington farm, did your uncles move with you as well?

Mohinder- no, we were living on our own.

Interviewer- so just your father, mother..?

Mohinder- yes, one of my uncles lives in Surrey, the other's in Mission, no the other two are in Mission. So they were, no we were separate from them.

I-so did your grandfather, did he live in Mission still?

Mohinder- dad, no grandfather passed away long time ago.

Interviewer- in 19-

Mohinder- no grandfather passed away after, my son was born.

Interviewer- oh really, but your father passed away in 1993.

Mohinder- yes 1993.

Interviewer- so, your grandfather passed away after your son was born right?

Mohinder- yes. So in '74, '75. My grandfather was born in 1905, passed away in May 1976. We are putting a picnic table out in the park.

Interviewer- which one?

Mohinder- so we are going to have his name plate on the top. It's right beside Harry Sayer's school.

Interviewer- so when your grandfather passed away in 1976, I know there's that crematorium in Mission at that point?

Mohinder- yes. The crematorium in Mission, grandfather passed away in India. He went back to, he retired from Whonnak lumber company...

Interviewer- what year, you know?

Mohinder- oh I can't remember that. Then he still wanted to work, at age 65 I think, and then he still wanted to work, he went up to Houston, out of the country, and he got a clean up job over there, and he work over there. Then he got, he had, something to do with the blood, something goes wrong, then he spent a little bit time in the hospital, then the doctor said you're okay. Then he went back to India, and back in India he started building a house, and worked very hard, because he's a hands on person, and...

Interviewer- so did he built the house himself?

Mohinder- no the carpenters build the house, but he would be right in there. And, I don't know if he finished the house or not, then he passed away.

Interviewer- did your grandmother go with him as well?

Mohinder- no, grandmother, passed away after.

Interviewer- after he did? Was she here?

Mohinder- she was here.

Interviewer- I don't know if you'll remember, because you were so young, but when you, your sister, and your mother arrived, do you remember the things that you brought with you?

Mohinder- those days you couldn't bring very much. No didn't bring anything.

Interviewer- just clothes?

Mohinder- just clothes that's all. Nothing much, don't remember what we brought. And grandfather was the president of the Sikh temple here.

Interviewer- in...

Mohinder- the old one.

Interviewer- the Khalsa Diwan Society one?

Mohinder- the heritage one.

Interviewer- do you know how long he was the president?

Mohinder- oh must have been there for about 10 years or so. Because when he was working, on the island, they used to live in a cook house. And in the cook house, he used to do all the letter writing, for all the other men that were in the cook house. And, then when he became the president of the Sikh temple here, the same thing, he did all the paperwork, he was good with English and all that so he took care of things.

Interviewer- so when, you were saying when he was on the island, was that the first couple of years when he was here?

Mohinder- yes the earlier years.