

Saw Mill worker Stories
Sukhdarshan Singh Gill Narrative
Interview Date: November 21st, 2014

Sukhdarshan Singh Gill was born on January 8, 1943 in East Punjab, Village Dhudike, India. Sukhdarshan Singh was educated in India, having studied in College. Before he arrived in Canada, two of Sukhdarshan Singh's brothers had already been living in Canada and thus, he was sponsored by his older brother Harnek Singh Gill. Because Sukhdarshan Singh was well educated it made the sponsorship process much more efficient and quicker. In total, Sukhdarshan Singh had five siblings in total-three brothers and two sisters.

Sukhdarshan Singh first arrived in Canada on October 31, 1968 on the point's basis system. When he first arrived his brother Harnek told him that they didn't have a home because he had spent much of the earnings in the sponsorship process for Sukhdarshan Singh. Therefore, the first thing Sukhdarshan Singh and Harnek did was take a \$2-\$3000 loan from the bank so they could purchase a home in Mission. Soon after, in November, Harnek then told Sukhdarshan Singh that he would help him in finding work. As such, Sukhdarshan Singh began by working in Merritt. Luckily, there lived another Punjabi man in Mission named 'Najjar' who also happened to be the caretaker at this mill, so he provided Sukhdarshan Singh with a ride to the mill. During the first three days the men whom Sukhdarshan Singh worked with helped him by making his meals and rotis; however, soon after the caretaker named Najjar said: "young man you aren't here visiting your massi (aunt) you need to learn how to make roti." And so Sukhdarshan Singh learned to make his own meals from a man named Mewa Singh whom Sukhdarshan Singh remembers spoke plenty of Urdu. At the mill, Sukhdarshan Singh worked on the chain as a pulling lumber at a starting wage of \$2.50 an hour. Thus in an eight hour period, Sukhdarshan Singh was able to earn \$20.00 which were good wages for those times. Most times, when there was a chance for Sukhdarshan Singh to work over time, he would so in order to be able to earn up to \$30.00 in a day then. After working at this mill in Merritt for nine months, there occurred a strike which lasted for another nine months. During this time Sukhdarshan Singh found work at for six months at Squamish mill thanks to his mama (mother's brother). After Squamish Sukhdarshan Singh moved back to work at the Whonnock Mill in Mission.

During the lunch breaks in the mills, Sukhdarshan Singh would only eat rotis and sabzis, which was made by himself. If there was ever need for Indian foods in particular that couldn't be purchased in the mainstream grocery stores, Sukhdarshan Singh recalls that there was one store in Vancouver where they could purchase daals, etc. Overall Sukhdarshan Singh has fond memories of working in the mill, with very little disputes he experienced in terms of racial discrimination with the other people of European origin or few Chinese workers. Sukhdarshan Singh retired in 2001.