



# CICS REPORT

A newsletter from the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley

## University of Mumbai establishes Indo-Canadian Studies Centre



Minister of Health Mike de Jong addressing the audience

UFV Associate Dean of Arts Susan Fisher went to Mumbai at the beginning of October to represent UFV at the opening of the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre (ICSC) at the University of Mumbai. This centre, supported by a grant from the government of British Columbia, is intended to be a "sister" centre to the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies. The formal establishment of the ICSC will result in even stronger connections between UFV and the University of Mumbai, leading to student and faculty exchanges and collaborative research and conferences.

The centre was officially opened by Dr. Rajan Welukar, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Mumbai, and Marvin Hildebrand, Consul General of Canada in Mumbai. In their speeches at the opening, both Dr. Welukar and Mr. Hildebrand spoke of the importance of building Canada-India exchanges and linkages.

To celebrate the opening, the centre's director, Professor Nilufer Bharucha, organized a symposium entitled "Re-Imaging the Old and Negotiating the New: Indo-Canadian Literature and Cinema." Among the speakers were two

scholars from Germany and several scholars affiliated with the University of Mumbai. Dr Fisher gave a speech entitled "South Asian Canadian Literature: Between World Literature and Canadian Literature." In attendance at the symposium were faculty and students from U Mumbai, including an impressive group of students from Mumbai's English MA program.

The next day, Dr Fisher gave an inaugural talk for the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre lecture series. The topic of her talk was "The Great War: Canada's 'Creation Story'?" This led to a very interesting discussion about Indian soldiers in the Great War and the way that they have (and have not) been remembered and honoured.

Following Dr Fisher's visit, on Nov 14 members of the BC Education Delegation who were travelling in India with Premier Christy Clark visited the centre. An education forum was hosted by Dr Bharucha with BC Minister of Health Mike de Jong as the invited guest. He announced a \$50,000 grant to UFV's CICS and the University of Mumbai's centre for further collaborations. The announcement was received with much gratitude by both universities.

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(from left to right) Dr. Barbara S. Haberkamp, U of Bonn; Dr. Nilufer Bharucha, Professor of English, U of Mumbai and honorary coordinator, ICSC; Dr. Susan Fisher, University of the Fraser Valley; Exchange student from Iran studying at U Mumbai; Ms. Kirti Javadekar, program assistant, U of Mumbai ICSC





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Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Manu Kaur Saluja

## Reach Gallery exhibits Punjabi Visions

There are a lot of museums and galleries around the world; however, few places outside of India cater specifically to South Asia. The United Kingdom has more than 30 museums/galleries that have Sikh artifacts. However, Canada being one of the most multicultural nations in the world has very few museums that either incorporate or are specifically set for South Asia. The Reach Gallery and Museum recently had the opening ceremony for 'Punjabi Visions', specially organized in honour of the Centennial of the National Historic Site Gur Sikh Temple in Abbotsford. This exhibition included paintings of local as well as international artists depicting rural Punjabi life, Maharajas of Punjab, and portraits of Punjabi women. Exhibitions like this are certainly a stepping stone for the South Asian community and will open up many doors for South Asian artifacts that were previously unknown to the communities that host them.

## Official opening of the Sikh Heritage Museum National Historic Site Gur Sikh temple



Honourable Lieutenant Governor of BC Steven L. Point at the opening of the Sikh Heritage Museum

The community of Abbotsford was proud to host the Honourable Steven L. Point, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, as the chief guest to officially open the first Sikh Heritage Museum in BC at the National Historic Site Gur Sikh Temple. Lieutenant Governor Point was accompanied by the Commander of the BC Regiment, Lt. Colonel Harjit Singh Sajjan. Many dignitaries welcomed Lieutenant Governor Point, including the president of the temple Kabal S. Hundal, Consul General of India Ashok Das, Abbotsford Mayor Bruce Banman, Minister of Health Mike de Jong, MLA John van Dongen, UFV President Mark Evered, and a large number of community members. After cutting the ribbon, touring the museum, paying obeisance at the temple, and signing the guest book, he joined the community for high tea at the temple. In his warm and humble speech Lieutenant Governor Point congratulated the Punjabi community for taking this initiative to preserve the history of the pioneers who came to Canada a hundred years ago.



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## Seventh Annual Ehsaas Film Festival with director David Gray



Director David Gray (second last from right) with other guests at the film festival

The seventh annual Ehsaas Film Festival was organized by the centre on November 15. To commemorate the Centennial of the Heritage Gur Sikh Temple Abbotsford, eight powerful Sikh documentaries were showcased to raise awareness about different aspects and issues of the Sikh faith, the Punjabi tradition and culture and to encourage the understanding of topics that are globally significant and yet have local relevance. Director David Gray attended the festival where two of his documentaries, *Searching for the Sikhs of Tod Inlet* and *Beyond the Gardens Walls*, were showcased.

As a child David Gray used to play at and explore the shores of Tod Inlet near Butchart Gardens in Victoria. It was then that he stumbled upon the remains of a village where workers of an old cement plant used to live. These workers were either of Chinese or Punjabi decent. This discovery led him to do more research and he collected the stories of these workers, which eventually were told in the form of a documentary.

When David went to the Chinese community to collect more information, he could not access the kind of information he needed, so he went to the Punjabi community. He was received by the Punjabi community with open arms and David's search began to take form. He was able to make connections with the families of many workers that worked at Tod Inlet.

David's interest in the Punjabi community grew, not only because of his experience making the documentaries, but because very little research had been done about this community that had been in Canada for so many years. David feels that through his documentaries he told a story about Canadian history that had never been told and was unknown to many people.

Currently, David is finishing his third documentary called *Canadian Sikh Soldiers*. OMNI TV has also agreed to fund his fourth project, *Lumber Lions*, based on Punjabi workers in the lumber industry. Another project that David is working on is called *Disimmigration*, which will detail the migration of Indians from 1904 leading up to the Komagata Maru tragedy in 1914.

### Faculty profile: Dr. Prabhjot Parmar



#### Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was brought up in India, and immigrated to Canada 18 years ago. I decided to pursue doctoral studies at the University of Western Ontario, which enabled me to draw on my English literature and geography background. My postdoctoral research with the Royal Holloway College, University of London, allowed me to conduct archival research in England. In 2011, I joined UFV in the English and SMCS faculties.

#### What is your affiliation with the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies?

I teach courses that complement the centre's philosophy, which is to provide the unique opportunity to experience Indo-Canadian culture through dialogue on history and culture.

#### What is your current research and teaching focus?

This year I am teaching South Asian Diaspora Literature, Indian Cinema, British Empire and the Notions of Mobility, and Academic Writing. My focuses include the 1947 partition and its ramifications around the world, as well as literary representations and letters of Indian soldiers who fought in the First World War.

#### What attracted you to research specifically on South Asia?

My PhD provided the opportunity to focus on South Asian literature and cinema from a postcolonial perspective. The rich diversity of India and the diaspora continue to offer many exciting and unexplored areas to examine.







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## Remembering brave Canadian heroes

The year 2011 was a memorable year as Abbotsford celebrated the Centennial of the National Historic Site Gur Sikh Temple and remembered those Canadian pioneers who helped build one of the most multicultural nations in the world. 2011 was also a year to remember and salute those brave Sikh heroes who affected change in Canada and set a foundation for all of us to derive inspiration from. Here are the stories of three such heroes.

### Lt Col Pritam Singh Jauhal

Col Jauhal retired from the Indian military in 1977 after serving valiantly for 39 years in the Indian Signal Corps. During his tenure he won 13 medals and retired as a proud Lt. Colonel. He moved to Canada in 1980 and after coming here he realized that Indian Army, Navy and Air Force pensioners who had settled in Canada could not receive their Indian pension as it had been stopped. Col Jauhal formed the Indian Ex-Servicemen's Society of British Columbia in Surrey to fight their cases and get them their pensions. Through correspondence with concerned authorities in India, the society settled hundreds of long outstanding cases of suspension of pension. Since then he has remained very active in the local community. Yet on Nov 11, 1993, he was stopped at the gates of the Newton Royal Canadian Legion Branch Lounge and not allowed to enter because he wore a turban. Col Jauhal was an invited guest to the lounge for Remembrance Day celebrations and had visited the lounge three days before the parade to seek details of the dress code. According to the Legion's rules, wearing a head dress was an insult to the war dead and the Monarch. Col Jauhal was quite upset with the treatment he and four other war veterans were receiving. He tried his best to explain to the Legion President Mr. Underwood the importance and significance of the turban to a Sikh. He argued that turban was not a mere headdress but it was a part of a Sikh's identity and he is cremated with it. He said that Sikhs had fought in both the World Wars with turbans on their heads.



Queen Elizabeth greets Lt.Col Jauhal in Victoria, BC.

"I emphasized that Queen Victoria on receipt of reports on the valor and gallantry displayed by Sikh soldiers during Anglo-Sikh Wars of 1845-46 and 1848-49 from the British Viceroy in India, ordered that Sikhs be enlisted in the Indian Army and they be permitted to keep their turbans and beards. She also directed that her personal bodyguards at Buckingham Palace be turbaned Sikhs."

However, Mr. Underwood refused to acknowledge these pleas and did not let the veterans into the Lounge. Col Jauhal did not give up and took the case to higher authorities and even wrote to the Queen. The case received a lot of national and international attention and as a result Mr. Underwood was fired and that legion lounge was disbanded for good. A man of discipline, sincerity, and dignity, Col Jauhal dedicated his life to his country and to his community. Now 91 years old, he resides with his family in Surrey.



Grave of Private Buckam Singh, Kitchener, ON

### Private Buckam Singh

Buckam Singh's grave was discovered just three years ago in Kitchener, Ontario, nine decades after he died fighting for Canada in the First World War. Buckam Singh was just 25 years old then and had not gone back to his home country since his arrival in BC in 1907 from Punjab at the young age of 14. After spending some time as a miner in B.C., he moved to Toronto in 1912 and enlisted in the Canadian army in 1915. Buckam Singh served with the 20th Canadian Infantry Battalion during WWI in the legendary battlefields of Flanders (Belgium) in 1916. Buckam Singh was shot twice during the war. The second time he was shot he received treatment at a hospital run by one of Canada's most famous soldier poets — Doctor Lt. Colonel John McCrae. Though he recovered from his wounds and returned back to England to continue his duty, he developed tuberculosis and died in 1919 at the Kitchener military hospital in Ontario. His grave is the only known grave of a Sikh soldier in Canada. Buckam Singh was betrothed to Pritam Kaur of Jalandhar at the age of 10, but due to strict immigration rules during those times, he was never able to call his family to Canada. He died fighting for the universal right of freedom, even though his adopted country at the time did not afford him the same levels of freedom other members of the community enjoyed.





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## Lt Col Harjit Singh Sajjan

**L**t Col Harjit Singh Sajjan recently made history and made the Sikh community around the world proud by becoming the first turbaned Sikh to take command of the British Columbia Regiment. Col Sajjan was five years old when he came to Canada and grew up in Vancouver during the time when young Indo-Canadians were being seduced by the youth gang member persona. Even though having a different identity such as keeping a turban would have made one more vulnerable to racism, Col Sajjan thought that it was also something that would save him from falling in the trap of a gang lifestyle. The fact that a young teenager would even think of applying true principles of Sikhism in his life and follow the values of his faith, speaks volumes about Col Sajjan's commitment and dedication. He joined the reserve unit in BC to go into the Air Force and had no intention of staying in the army. It was during this time that Col Sajjan started facing challenges due to his turban. Little had he realized as a teenager that the Canadian military

would ever affix labels on him and it shocked him to discover that racism existed within the armed forces. This wasn't easy and it soon deflated young Sajjan's confidence. He called his father and told him that he wanted to quit. His father replied: "Son, you can quit but do realize this, that any other Sikh that comes there after you will be labelled as a failure before they even joined." This statement was life-changing for this young man. His stubbornness kicked in and in order to prove all the stereotypes wrong he decided that he would stay, work hard and prove them wrong. Col Sajjan did so well in his training that he was asked not to leave the army to join the Air Force. The rest as they say is history. In Col Sajjan's words, "I see Sikhism differently, you are not a part of it, it actually becomes a part of you. Sikhism is how you live and what you choose to do. Wearing a turban was a commitment that I had to make to stay on the right path and not go astray." Col Sajjan's story shows how hard work, perseverance, and dedication can lead to success.



CICS Director Satwinder Bains signing the MOU with Punjabi University Registrar Prof A.S. Chawla

## UFV signs Memorandum of Understanding with Punjabi University, Patiala

**U**FV signed a formal MoU with Punjabi University, Patiala on Nov 16 in Chandigarh as a part of the BC education delegation that travelled to India with BC Premier Christy Clark. The MoU will open the doors for future collaborations with faculty at both universities as a follow up to the visit by the Vice Chancellor and Registrar of Punjabi University to UFV in August. Through this MoU, UFV will develop links on Punjabi language instruction, historical and Diaspora research, faculty exchanges as well as student internships.







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## Student Leader profile: Sheetal Deo



### What are you studying at UFV? What are some of your future goals/aspirations?

I am finishing my last semester at UFV in the Bachelor of Arts program with a major in philosophy and minor in political science. Upon graduating from UFV I plan to pursue graduate studies in law at UVic and become a corporate lawyer.

### What is your connection to CICS?

I was introduced to CICS through my participation with the South Asian Peer Network Association (SAPNA). I joined as a volunteer primarily to bulk up my academic CV and resumé because I was not really involved in much since starting university. One thing led to another, and I became the acting president while the president was in India for an internship. I was encouraged by the CICS to pursue involvement in the conferences they held and the opportunities just kept on coming.

### How can we get more youth involved in campus activities?

I think the best way to get more youth involved is to let them know of the opportunities that are available to students. I used to think getting involved meant spending copious amounts of time and energy standing at a booth, or at a stall, but as I quickly learned, the variety of opportunities available are endless. Just ask!



Photo provided by: Gerhard von Rosen <gerhard@gaipix.com>



ABOVE: UFV Bhangra team performing at Clarke Theatre  
BELOW: UFV student volunteers at the CICS booth

## CICS participates in Diwali celebrations at Mission

**D**iwali, the Festival of Lights, was celebrated on October 25 at Mission Clarke Theatre with great energy and vitality, hosted by Mission Community Services. There were approximately 1,000 people from all walks of life who attended the event and the positive feedback from the organizers and the community spoke volumes about the festivities. The Foyer of the Heritage Park Secondary School was packed with children and their parents enjoying crafts, henna, activities and story time. There were many displays which were informative and educational for the community, especially newcomers to Mission who could find a variety of resources at one place for themselves, for seniors and for children from birth to 18 years. This was the first event where all the representatives of faith groups in Mission were invited to be involved in the event. The organizers value their capacity for being highly welcoming and inclusive in terms of inviting people from a diversity of ages, religions, ethno-cultural backgrounds, and various multicultural view points. It was an open event that was enjoyed by all. UFV Bhangra, UFV Giddha, and UFV Bollywood dance teams all entertained the audience with amazing routines. The CICS also had a booth set up where they gave out information about the festival of Diwali and the centre's activities. CICS volunteers also kept the kids busy with face painting and tattoos.





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## Conference on Guru Nanak's philosophy & science



Scholars with other guests at the conference

To commemorate Guru Nanak's birthday, the Institute for Understanding Sikhism-IUS (Montreal), together with the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and the Khalsa Diwan Society, Abbotsford, organized a conference on Guru Nanak's philosophy and science. The main idea of this conference was to initiate interest among theologians and researchers about the need to look into the philosophy of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, from a scientific point of view. Scholars argued that the philosophy of Guru Nanak embodied in his Bani is still being represented by theologians having no knowledge of science so far. This two-day conference, attended by over a hundred people, generated a lot of dialogue and brought to light many aspects of Sikh philosophy. After the success of the conference, participants and audience suggested that a group be formed and topics of interest be discussed on a monthly basis in Abbotsford.

## Greeting the Light — a UFV South Asian literary colloquium



UFV faculty members with other guests

The centre, together with the English department and the UFV Research Office, sponsored the Greeting the Light colloquium. At this event UFV'S new hires in South Asian and Diaspora literatures, Prabhjot Parmar and Rajish Dhawan, spoke about their research interests and the projects they are currently involved in. Poet and scholar Chris Levenson recited his poetry and spoke of how he became interested in South Asian literature. UFV English instructor Trevor Carolan talked about *The Lotus Singers: Contemporary Stories from South Asia*, a new book that he edited and had recently been released. The audience enjoyed an hour of South Asian literature in its many forms.

## SAPNA activities



UFV Giddha team performing at Diwali

The South Asian Peer Network Association (SAPNA) saw a big turn out when they celebrated Diwali at the centre on Oct 20. The UFV bhangra and giddha teams entertained everyone with their energetic performances. UFV President Mark Evered wore traditional Indian attire and welcomed everyone to the event and wished everyone a very happy Diwali. Students and attendees had a lot of fun and were seen dancing, enjoying food, and getting henna applied to their hands.

SAPNA's monthly chai time discussions were well attended by students, faculty, and community members. These discussions focus on various topics like issues of identity, and social, cultural, or religious issues. These discussions are now also being published in the Punjabi Patrika for all to read and participate. The most recent discussions have focused on the vulnerable positions that some women find themselves in when their marriages break down and they have little social support to see them through this difficult time. An outcome of this discussion is a larger community-wide engagement proposed for March 8 on International Women's Day.







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Photo provided by: Gerhard von Rosen <gerhard@gaiapix.com>



## Classical music warms CICS

CICS partnered with Virasat Foundation to bring two acclaimed Indian classical music virtuosos to UFV. Pandit Manu Kumar Seen (sitar player) and Ustad Akram Khan (tabla player) performed and demonstrated their skill and art form to an appreciative audience on Nov 23. These artists mesmerized the audiences with their performance and explained the importance and value of the ragas they were playing. They also described how their instruments (sitar and tabla) work. Concerts like these encourage artists and keep the tradition of Indian classical music alive in the West.

## Film-maker and author, Ali Kazimi visits Abbotsford



Ali Kazimi is a writer and an award-winning documentary film maker based in Toronto. Some of his documentaries include *Rex vs. Singh*, *Runaway Grooms*, *Continuous Journey*, *Documenting Dissent*, *Some Kind of Arrangement* and *Passage from India*. Kazimi is a film professor at York University, Toronto and he was recently at the Reach Gallery Museum in Abbotsford to launch his book *Undesirables: White Canada and The Komagata Maru*. This book is based on the Komagata Maru tragedy where a boat filled with 376 Indians was forcefully turned back by Canadian authorities after harbouring at the Vancouver port for two months. Ali's presentation about his book was both fascinating and captivating. The book contains rare archival photographs and visual materials, some never seen before. This book is a gift to the South Asian community and sheds insight into one of the darkest chapters of Canadian history. Ali was also kind enough to present a gift copy of this special book to all the guests who attended the lunch.

## Upcoming Events

**Jan 23–Feb 4:** Visiting faculty and PhD research scholar from Punjab University, Chandigarh

**March 8:** Holi & International Women's Day Celebrations

**March 28:** Ehsaas South Asian Readers and Writers Festival

**April 4:** Heat Game CICS Partnership for Vaisakhi

**June:** New exhibit at the Sikh Heritage Museum, Abbotsford

Please check our website [www.ufv.ca/cics](http://www.ufv.ca/cics) for current and updated information.

# CICS REPORT

*The newsletter for the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies*

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### Comments/Suggestions:

We would appreciate any comments, suggestions, or inquiries about the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies. Please feel free to email Navneet.Sidhu@ufv.ca or call 604-851-6325.

