

Sept 25 Joginder brother

Indian immigrant succeeds after struggle

Last week I learned of a tale of hard work and determination which has led to success in his adopted land. It is the story of Gurbax Singh Parmar, a part-time resident of the Cowichan Valley.

Before the Punjab was partitioned to form Pakistan, Gurbax Singh's great grandfather was a farmer on the east side of Punjab. Because of the canal system in what is now Pakistan, he moved his family to Lylepur. Lylepur derived its name from the British Gen. Lyle and "pur" which means settlement.

For three generations the family prospered and was a large landowner in the area near the present city of Lahore. At that time, Lahore was the capital of the huge state of Punjab.

With India's independence in 1947, West Punjab became Pakistan, which caused a massive migration, where all the Sikh people in Pakistan were moved to the much smaller Punjab, and all the Moslem people in the east were moved to their new country of Pakistan. Gurbax Singh's father was forced to give up their huge farm and settle on a much smaller piece of land in East Punjab.

At the time of this difficult transition, Gurbax was 15 years old, but was a top student, winning scholarships in high school, and continued on this level into the University in Jullunder. He graduated from university with an M.A. and finished in the top 10 students.

He began teaching in India, married and had four children, but always strove to better his position. His older brother, Joginder was already living in Canada, having

been sponsored by his wife's relatives. In 1964, his brother applied to bring him to Canada, but the application was refused on the grounds the brother did not have enough merit to sponsor him. He was not yet a Canadian citizen, and did not have enough money to support another family.

Joginder wrote back to the Department of Immigration. He explained that during the period 1958-1961 there was such a shortage of teachers in Canada that the Canadian government had accepted trained teachers from commonwealth countries who already knew English, on their own merit, without sponsorship.

When the immigration officials learned of his scholarships and teacher's rating, they sent Joginder a letter and told him to send it to his brother and have him take it to the immigration officer in Delhi. Gurbax Singh's application was now immediately accepted and he and his family left for a new life

Indo Canadian

Joan Mayo



in Canada.

Unfortunately, he arrived during a time of labour strife in B.C. It was the end of a contract year and thousands of people were on strike. As well, UBC was turning out so many new teachers that teaching jobs in B.C. were becoming scarce. He applied in many schools, but with no luck. He was not yet a Canadian citizen and was told to take a refresher course. Finally he found work in sawmills, working at Honeymoon Bay and Nanaimo.

Due to the unsettled labour scene

in southern B.C., he moved to a sawmill in the new area of Williams Lake, but he continued to look for a teaching job.

Through determination and perseverance, he finally landed a job teaching Grade five in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Each year he attended summer school, upgrading his certificate, always finishing with top marks, specializing in maths and sciences. He later moved to Newfoundland, where he obtained a position in a high school, teaching math, chemistry and physics, subjects more in tune with

his special training.

He has worked his way up to vice principal of Lanse Au Claire High School on the border between Quebec and Newfoundland. He says he is not interested in an administrative job because of the discipline problems of today, and is therefore planning an early retirement in approximately two years time.

Upon his retirement, he will settle in Duncan, where he already

owns a home, to be near his children and grandchildren.

He and his wife Ranjeet have three daughters and one son. Two of the daughters are nurses and the other is studying social work at UBC.

Gurbax Singh has seen and endured a lot in his lifetime, and should he find work as a substitute teacher in Duncan, would be able to pass some of his wisdom on to the youth of the Cowichan Valley.

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