

[Basakhi marks beginning of new year]

April 9/87
THE COWICHAN NEWS LEADER

COMMUNITY

Basakhi marks beginning of new year

With the coming of Spring comes one of the most important festivals on the Sikh calendar. Basakhi falls on April 13 and is the beginning of a new year according to the sacred calendar of India. In the Punjab it is celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs alike as the last day of the old year before the start of the new.

At the time of Guru Gobind Singh a festival was held in an important religious holiday for the Sikhs.

Unlike the usual new year celebrations in Canada the Sikh new year arrives quietly and will be celebrated in a religious manner. In order that more people may take part, the last night of the festival begins at the end of the month of April 11, 12 and 13 which will also coincide with the Christian religious calendar of Easter. Beginning with morning prayers at 5:30 a.m. and the celebra-



Indo Canadian
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with the cooking, dish washing and cleaning up.

It was at the Basakhi celebration of Anandpur in 1689 that Guru Gobind Singh formed his Sikh army known as the Khanda Brotherhood.

Knowing that peaceful opposition to the tyranny of the nation rulers would only continue to feed the martyrdom of more men like himself, Guru Gobind Singh took advantage of his annual gathering for Basakhi and asked for volunteers to step forward to give up their lives for the honor of God's name. One by one they stepped forward until he had 300 in all. Each man was taken inside a tent after which Guru Gobind Singh emerged with a bloody sword asking for another volunteer until he had 300. The 300th volunteer was a woman who stepped forward and he killed her.

as his five chosen warriors and included a cowherd of Baginam whose milk drink the new nation knew as amrit. He then announced to those in front an army of baptized Sikhs who would fight against any form of tyranny or oppression. He stated that each would take the name Singh, which means lion, to give him bravery and courage which is a collective name with amrit. But amrit is not to be drunk from the names of India.

Thousands stepped forward to join his army which he called the Khanda, meaning the sword.

It was at this time also that Guru Gobind Singh ordered each to keep the Five K's on his

body.

- 1) Kesh - uncut hair and beard
- 2) Kanga - a comb to comb the hair and keep it clean
- 3) Karna - a steel bangle on the wrist representing the eternal presence of God with all beings and no one.
- 4) Kirpan - a sword either small or large.
- 5) Kachera - short underwear to be worn under the dhoti for modesty.

Shortly before the death of Guru Gobind Singh it is said that he was in a state of mind that he had seen the Sikh holy book, he received a letter from Guru Arjan Sahib, now gathered at the golden temple in Amritsar, which asked for an authorized place of worship.

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2020_06_07_01_040

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