

UFV launches new initiatives to showcase South Asian Canadian contributions to British Columbia

by Anne Russell on [April 12, 2022](#)

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Dr. Satwinder Bains, Director of the South Asian Studies Institute, welcomes the audience at the launch of the South Asian Canadian Legacy Project.

new resources aimed at reducing racism through education are now available across British Columbia.

Launched April 12 by the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley, the South Asian Canadian Legacy Project aims to raise awareness and knowledge of the valuable contributions of South Asian Canadians to British Columbia's diverse cultures, history, heritage, economy, and society.

"The South Asian Canadian Legacy Project empowers British Columbians to discover, learn, research, and share the rich and robust histories of South Asian Canadians who helped build this beautiful province," said Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains, Director at the UFV South Asian Studies Institute.

Propelled by a \$1.14 million grant from the Province of British Columbia and with support from the Abbotsford Community Foundation, the project is part of the government's response to community consultations on racism and hate conducted in 2019.

“The South Asian Canadian Legacy Project will raise awareness of the many contributions South Asian Canadians have made to our culture, heritage, and economy,” said Premier John Horgan. “It encourages us to learn from the past and take bold steps towards a brighter future. I encourage all British Columbians to explore this project.”

The initiative includes Saffron Threads — a new learning resource for BC K-12 teachers exploring South Asian Canadian history, culture, and heritage.

Saffron Threads includes detailed activity plans and resources, developed in partnership with Open School BC, that will help teachers bring important topics for all students into the classroom including migration and settlement, discrimination, identity, and culture.

Teachers and parents can find Saffron Threads resources available via digital download for free at www.saffronthreads.ca.

“The South Asian Canadian communities in B.C. have been calling on the government to share the rich history of South Asian Canadians, both the challenges and contributions. It is a key piece of my mandate to start work establishing Canada’s first-of-its-kind museum to document the history, art and contributions of South Asian people in B.C.,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. “The Province is proud to support the South Asian Canadian Legacy Project to connect us to the past and the present. Recognizing the contributions and resilience of South Asian Canadians is an important step for us to learn and do better for all British Columbians and generations to come.”

Rich archives that tell the stories of South Asian migration and contributions to Canada have found a new life as part of the Legacy Project. The UFV South Asian Studies Institute has methodically digitized thousands of photos, documents, and videos from privately held collections to create the [South Asian Canadian Digital Archive](http://www.sacda.ca) (SACDA). Find it at: www.sacda.ca.

“In order for students to become engaged global citizens, education must include the stories and voices of our multicultural society,” noted UFV President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Joanne MacLean. “I am pleased the South Asian Canadian Legacy Project will provide valuable resources for learning and reflecting on the many contributions made by B.C.’s South Asian community.”

The South Asian Canadian Legacy Project also includes a physical travelling exhibit that will be visiting all regions of B.C. over the next four years. The bilingual exhibit titled *Haq and History* — “*haq*” meaning “rights” in Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu— was developed in collaboration between UFV and the Royal BC Museum.

The exhibit explores themes of trans-pacific journeys, families, and homes, community celebrations and commemorations, sawmill experiences, and community activism for rights and justice. As the exhibit travels, it will partner with local GLAM sector institutions and South Asian Canadian communities to add relevant local content with the goal to expand the historic record.

The exhibit is also paired with an outreach kit that educators, schools, and community centres can use to teach content from *Haq and History*. B.C. schools and organizations can [request an outreach kit](#) through the Royal BC Museum.

Haq and History can be viewed in the atrium of the Surrey Centre Library until June 30, 2022 before it makes its way across B.C and into its communities.

Ground-breaking research is captured in [Union Zindabad!](#) which chronicles the history of South Asian Canadians’



Satwinder Bains, Director of the South Asian Studies Institute, with federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh.

involvement in the BC labour movement in partnership with the BC Labour Heritage Centre.

The Project also undertook documentation and further engagement of **historic sites of significance** across BC.

Nineteen authors came together to write chapters in ***A Social History of South Asians in British Columbia*** — a book that threads South Asian Canadian stories from 1897 to the present moment.

You can engage with these resources at www.threadingourstories.ca.

Slideshow of the launch event



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Dave Pinton, Director, Communications

Tel: 604-702-2606 Cell: 778-808-5661

dave.pinton@ufv.ca

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33844 King Road, Abbotsford BC, Canada V2S 7M8

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