



# PUNJABI- SIKH CANADIANS

PIONEERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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## Purpose:

British Columbia is home to almost 244,000 Punjabi-speaking citizens. This project reflects a diverse community and is meant to engage learners in a critical study of Punjabi and Sikh pioneer contributions to Canada. The goal is for all students in Langley to see themselves and their peers well represented in meaningful ways. We use the term “Sikh” to refer to people associated with the Sikh religion. The term “Punjabi” can refer to both a language and/or a person who belongs to Punjabi culture. The Punjabi language and Punjabi people originate from Punjab, a state (province) in both India and Pakistan. Sikh and Punjabi can both be used together and separately to describe a people.

*This project and its teachings reflect First People’s Principles of Learning.<sup>1</sup> Specifically:*

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning requires exploration of one’s identity.

Throughout the guide you will see intentional boxes, **just like this**, that encourage students to reflect on their learning with the First Peoples Principles of Learning in a direct and explicit manner. There are mid-unit formative prompts, to encourage the ongoing connection to F.P.P.L as well as a Reflection at the end of every unit that takes the time to stop and addresses the principle of focus. Many of the F.P.P.L. are interconnected and students may find connections with principles for a unit that go beyond the principle of focus, this is encouraged and celebrated as meaningful.

### *Literacy*

This guide includes connections to both literacy and numeracy which are key aspects of the BC curriculum. Literacy has long been an important aspect of any social studies class. In this guide you will see that we attempt to include graphic organizers and teaching strategies that promote the ranking, categorizing, and connecting of content. These strategies are meant to engage students with the text so they can identify, interpret, organize, explain, and assess information; all while being creative in their communication. We attempt to use reflection throughout the resource for students to unpack and share their thinking. Finally, we attempt to include diverse types of texts like newspaper articles, primary sources, archival materials, poetry, quotes, and one-page informational texts to support student exposure to a range of necessary literacy forms.

### *Numeracy*

This guide strives to connect the concept of numeracy to the social studies classroom. We know the phrase ‘we are all numeracy teachers,’ yet are still working to see what this could look like in the context of our classes. The use of data and the types of inquiry questions we created, supports the beginning of our understanding in applying numeracy to our social studies curriculum.

### *Students will know:*

The learning activities are intended to help students become more aware, critical, and reflective in their knowledge of Punjabi-Sikh Canadians. The units aim to cover the past by identifying contributions, acknowledging hardship and adversity, and celebrating pioneer accomplishments and cultural pride. Through

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/PUB-LFP-POSTER-Principles-of-Learning-First-Peoples-poster-11x17.pdf>

oral testimonies, primary source analysis, and case studies on historic and contemporary contributions of Punjabi-Sikh Canadians.

*Students will do:*

Using the historical thinking concepts; historical significance, historical perspective, ethical judgement, continuity and change, and cause and consequence, students will use primary and secondary source evidence to evaluate the development and importance of community. Students will evaluate the ways in which certain voices have been oppressed or ignored, and they will make informed judgments about discriminatory laws and attitudes of the past.

*Students will understand:*

The project will reveal how historical and contemporary injustices challenge the narrative and identity of Canada as an inclusive, multicultural society<sup>2</sup>. By sharing and celebrating these stories, we are highlighting the accomplishments, experiences, and resiliency of Punjabi-Sikh Canadians. Students will expand their worldview and perspective with a stronger understanding of Punjabi culture, Sikh beliefs, and pioneer contributions. Students are also encouraged to wrestle with the discrepancy between the authentic experiences of Punjabi-Sikh Canadians and their representation or lack of representation as contributors to Canadian society.

*How this Resource came to exist:*

The focus is not to only highlight past experiences and the history. Our goal is to empower and centre Punjabi Sikh Canadians as active agents, as opposed to a one-dimensional portrayal of victims. We highlight their role as pioneers and their historic and continuing contributions to British Columbia.

*How to use this Resource:*

The activities and ideas in this guide were created to support teacher autonomy and teacher planning. Ultimately, the hope is to inspire teachers to take the skills and content in this guide and make it relevant to the context of their classrooms. Many of the sections include several activities that could be done singularly, all together or a mixture of both. Importantly, in many of the units, it includes too many activities to do in a single unit and teachers are encouraged to select and adapt materials for their grade, course, and student population.

Each unit includes an intro statement, **that looks like this**, written for teachers to read. These statements attempt to summarize the unit and include any considerations the teachers should ponder prior to engaging with the unit.

Finally, this resource truly is a start- there are many more topics to cover and teach regarding the important history of Punjabi-Sikh Canadians. Our collective hope is that this guide can be a foundation for the ongoing inclusion of these peoples, and their history.

Resource Creators:

Balroop Dhanoa	(REMSS, SD35)	<a href="mailto:BDhanoa@sd35.bc.ca">BDhanoa@sd35.bc.ca</a>
Jasneet Brar	(REMSS, SD35)	<a href="mailto:JBrar@sd35.bc.ca">JBrar@sd35.bc.ca</a>
Lesley Gunning	(REMSS, District Instructional Services, SD35)	<a href="mailto:LGunning@sd35.bc.ca">LGunning@sd35.bc.ca</a>

<sup>2</sup> <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/10/core>

## Glossary:

- *As a class create an ongoing list of important terms to known/understand. Add to it as you work through the content. Listed below are Terms and Definitions, you may choose to share/teach (this is by no means a definitive list):*

### **Diaspora:**

Movement or spread of people away from their homeland.

### **Disenfranchised:**

Taking away someone's right to vote. Indo-Canadian citizens in BC were disenfranchised in 1907. They were not allowed to vote in elections until 1947.

### **Hindu:**

People who culturally, ethnically, or religiously follow the religion of "Hinduism". Hinduism is a collection of many traditions and philosophies from India. Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world.

### **"Hindoo":**

Generic term for all Indians in the late nineteenth century and beyond. Often used in newspaper articles about Indian immigrants, as well as in the general population. The term was racist and reflected the general populations' lack of knowledge concerning Indian culture and religions.

### **Indo Canadian:**

This term describes Canadian citizens, or those living in Canada, who identify as having ancestry, history, language, or culture from India. This may also include the generations of peoples who are descendants of immigrants who were born in India. The term does not mean that the person was necessarily born in India but could also be an individual who identifies themselves in both Canadian and Indian contexts.

### **"Paki":**

The word "Paki" dated from the late 1960s and early 1970s when incidents of "Paki bashing" took place with the result that the term had become associated with violent attacks against people of South Asian origin.

<https://www.asianimage.co.uk/news/10344450.why-the-term-paki-is-and-always-will-be-offensive/>

### **Prejudice:**

An attitude, usually negative, directed toward a person or group of people based on wrong or distorted information. Prejudiced thinking may result in acts of discrimination.

### **Punjab:**

A north-western region in India where the Sikh religion originated. 'Punjab,' was derived from 'punj' meaning five and 'ab' meaning river, referring to the five rivers that pass through the area. It is also inhabited by Hindus and Muslims. Punjab was divided up between India and Pakistan during the partition of India in 1947, following the end of the colonial British Raj (1858-1947).

### **Punjabi:**

A reference to the language of Punjabi and the culture of Punjab. A person may not be from the State of Punjab but may still identify as Punjabi because that is their mother tongue and by extension their culture of Punjab. (similar to how the British are called the "English" but it also refers to the language or referring to the "French" people as well as the French language).



**Racism:**

When prejudice and power combine to discriminate against a particular group or individuals of a group. This term points to the particular effects of state-sponsored racism such as police violence or divide-and-rule policies towards Indigenous, Black or racialized communities.

Challenging Racist 'British Columbia': 150 Years and Counting, *Glossary* Access [here](#)

**Racialization:**

The ongoing processes of constructing and imposing racial categories and characteristics on a given person or community.

Challenging Racist 'British Columbia': 150 Years and Counting, *Glossary* Access [here](#)

**Sikh:**

A monotheistic religion that originated in the 15th Century, in the region of Punjab (India/Pakistan). Pronounced like "Sick-h", not "Seek". The word Sikh means "learner" or "disciple".

-Beliefs of Sikhi:

- There is only one God, without form or gender
- Everyone has direct access to God
- Everyone is equal before God (regardless of caste or sex)
- A good life is lived as part of a community, by living honestly and caring for others
  - o "Naam Japna": remember and keep god present in your mind
  - o "Kirth Karni": work hard
  - o "Vand Shakna": caring for others and sharing of wealth in the community

**Systemic Racism:**

Institutionalized discrimination that may appear neutral but in fact establishes white domination as the norm and that has an exclusionary and discriminatory impact on Indigenous, Black and racialized communities.

Challenging Racist 'British Columbia': 150 Years and Counting, *Glossary* Access [here](#)

**South Asian:**

South Asia encompasses the countries of India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. It is a term used by people who currently reside in the areas within the South Asian geography. South Asian is also used to identify a person with cultural roots from the region who is living within a diaspora such as Canada, US, UK, or Australia.

Royal BC Museum Learning Portal, *A Definition of Terms*. Access [here](#)

**Stereotype:**

A widely held, but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing