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Symbol of Sikh Resilience Honoured with Stop of Interest Sign

May 3, 2019



Sikh settlers' efforts to build a spiritual and community home in the early 1900s, while making Canada their new home, are now recognized by a BC [Stop of Interest sign](#).

A sign for the Gur Sikh Temple was unveiled at the Gur Sikh Temple and Heritage Museum, in Abbotsford, on [April 14, 2019](#). The temple is the oldest still-standing Sikh gurdwara in

North America, and was designated a [National Historic Site](#), on July 31, 2002. Honouring the structure and those who built it in April, was especially significant as that's Sikh Heritage Month in BC, and when Vaisakhi is celebrated to mark the start of the agricultural year and commemorate the origins of the Sikh faith and traditions.

Sikh settlers began building the temple in 1908, using lumber donated by the Abbotsford Lumber Company. After much toil and financial commitment, the temple was completed three years later, providing a place for the settlers to meet their religious needs, gather, provide food and shelter to those in need, and help each other in their new country.

At that time, laws severely restricted immigration from India, and men who moved to Canada (mostly from the Punjab area) [worked long, hard hours](#) to support families they had to leave behind. According to the [Khalsa Diwan Society of Abbotsford's website](#), between 1907 and 1912, about 5,000 men immigrated to Canada to work in the lumber, agricultural and fishing industries. In 1918, the British Ministry of Information advised the Canadian government that, "Indians already permanently domiciled in other British countries would be allowed to bring in their wives and minor children." However, the wives of the men did not arrive until 1921.



"For the Sikh community the building is a gift given to them by the settlers," says the website. "It signifies their sacrifices, their perseverance against many odds and their resilience to carve out a place for themselves and their families."

The Gur Sikh Temple's wood frame and false front is like that of other Canadian frontier-era buildings. However, inside it reflects Sikh traditions and beliefs.

In 2003, the Khalsa Diwan Society began restoring the temple, and it was officially reopened in 2007. The ground floor, which housed a kitchen and dining hall, was converted into a museum in 2011. The second floor still serves as a centre for prayer and congregation. Visitors are encouraged to [visit the temple and museum](#) and guided tours can be organized.



The Stop of Interest Sign at the Gur Sikh Temple honours the Sikh pioneers' determination, faith and courage, and their struggles against racial discrimination. It showcases the richness of BC's unique history and cultural diversity for British Columbians and visitors to our province.

Stop of Interest signs each tell a story of a person, place or event significant to BC's history, and were first erected in 1958. In 2016, the BC government began to rejuvenate the existing signs, and invited the public to submit ideas for new signs which resulted in more than 500 nominations. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is in the process of installing new signs, to ensure everyone can continue to stop and learn about BC, as they travel our province. View our [gallery of Stop of Interest signs](#) for an armchair tour.

Our gratitude to the Khalsa Diwan Society, Abbotsford, for its impressive documentation about the first Sikh pioneers to migrate to British Columbia, from which we have drawn many of these facts. We acknowledge also, that the site attributes historical content and source material from: Buchignani, N., Indra, D. M., & Srivastava, R. (1985). Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada. Toronto: McClelland.

BC Travellers, Stop of Interest Signs

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