



REPORT

Report Date: June 22, 2022
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Meeting Date: July 5, 2022
Submit comments to Council

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Arts Culture and Community Services
SUBJECT: Historical Discrimination against People of South Asian Canadian Descent

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council receive this interim report as an update of work to date on the development of recommendations to Council to acknowledge and address the historical discrimination and ongoing racism against people of South Asian Canadian descent.
- B. THAT Council endorse staff to continue to work with the Community Advisory Group and community partners to conduct ongoing research including historical research and document analysis, data collection, and broader community engagement to inform development of recommended actions. Funding needed to continue this work will be considered for the 2023 budget process. Council will need to deprioritize an existing initiative to free up existing funding or approve additional property tax to fund the initiative.
- C. THAT Council endorse staff to advance work on the following Action While Planning priorities identified by the community:
 - i. As part of ongoing interdepartmental work with Punjabi Market, explore the steps and resources that may be needed in formally recognizing Punjabi Market as a historically and culturally significant area and report back on feasibility and considerations in the final report.
 - ii. Identify priorities with regard to the creation and preservation of South Asian Canadian community spaces in Vancouver in response to erasure and loss of cultural heritage and include recommendations in the final report.

- iii. Prepare for a secondary street re-naming after the Komagata Maru, to be implemented after the completion of the Commemoration Policy and work with the community to explore other opportunities to commemorate areas of historical and cultural significance to the South Asian Canadian community in Vancouver.

REPORT SUMMARY

This interim report provides an update to Council on the ongoing work with community arising from Council Motion 13368: *Historical Discrimination against People of South Asian Descent in Vancouver*. City staff engaged a small but diverse intersection of South Asian Canadian communities, including through a Community Advisory Group. The report further outlines the next phase of work, including broader community engagement, required to report back to Council with a final report and recommendations. The report also identifies the need to identify additional resources to enable this next phase of work.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

City of Reconciliation Framework, 2014

Motion B.4 Historical Discrimination against People of Chinese Descent in Vancouver, 2014

Healthy City Strategy Phase 2 Action Plan 2015 to 2018, 2015

Equity Framework, 2021

The City of Vancouver's Accessibility Interim Report, 2021

Motion 14395 Standing Up to the Rise in Anti-Asian Racism, All Racism & Hate Crimes, 2020

Komagata Maru Apology and Remembrance Day Proclamation, 2021

Punjabi Market and Examining Sunset Community Vision for Updates, 2016

Motion 13368 B.10 Historical Discrimination Against People of South Asian Descent in Vancouver, 2019

Minutes – Regular Council: 2019 Jul 23

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

Directions in Council Motion

In July 2019, Vancouver City Council referred a motion to address historic discrimination against South Asian Canadian communities in Vancouver to RECE and Staff. Specific work noted in the motion included:

THAT Council direct staff to develop a report on historical discrimination against the South Asian community in Vancouver. In doing so staff should:

- i. Engage directly and work collaboratively with the South Asian Community in Vancouver, including but not limited to academics, historians, artists, professionals, business and community leaders, and community organizations;
 - ii. Provide a summary of laws, regulations and policies of previous Vancouver City Councils that discriminated against the people of South Asian descent in the City of Vancouver from the late 1890s to the present;
 - iii. Report back to Council with recommendations on steps and actions in support of reconciliation, including changes to resources and policies to acknowledge any of these wrongdoings, and also including plans for a public acknowledgement and formal apology to the South Asian community;
 - iv. Prepare a proposed scope of work, budget, and timeline in Fall 2019 to ensure consideration in the 2020 budget process;
 - v. Include recommended actions City Council could take or announce in tandem with the 50th anniversary of Vancouver's Punjabi Market on May 31, 2020;
- FURTHER THAT Council directs staff to connect this work to the development and implementation of the City-wide Plan.

The approved referral directed the following:

THAT Council refer the motion entitled "Historical Discrimination Against People of South Asian Descent in Vancouver" to the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee to provide recommendations to Council on the historical discrimination against the South Asian community in Vancouver;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to work with the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee and report back with recommendations coming from that work as soon as possible, or by early 2020.

In response to the referral to RECE and staff, staff identified necessary budget resources in the 2020 budget to undertake the work, which requires engagement with the South Asian Canadian diaspora communities in Vancouver, and have been keeping RECE updated on project progress once work initiated. Council approved funding in 2020 budget to advance the work, however due to the onset and ongoing impacts of COVID, initiation of the work was delayed until fall of 2021. As per Council direction, staff will continue to keep RECE updated and will ensure RECE has an opportunity to review and comment on final recommendations before presentation to Council.

Vancouver City Council also passed the Komagata Maru Apology and Remembrance Day Proclamation (013952) and in May 2021 Vancouver City Council formally apologized for all the injustices and discrimination against 376 passengers travelling on board the Komagata Maru steamship from India in 1914. Council also declared Sunday, May 23, 2021 as the first Komagata Maru Remembrance Day to be marked by the City of Vancouver.

Cultural Redress and Anti-racism

Anti-Indigenous, anti-Black and anti-Asian racism and other forms of discrimination are deeply rooted in the history of Vancouver and other communities across Canada. The City has expressed its commitment to standing alongside Indigenous, Black and racialized people and to hear and respond to calls for action within its own organization's functions and through advocacy with other agencies and levels of government. Current systems and institutions were built and grew from historic foundations of colonialism and white supremacy resulting in anti-

Indigenous, anti-Black, and anti-Asian discrimination. The City has a responsibility to address its historic and ongoing role in perpetuating inequities and racism, a responsibility and a call to be anti-racist by using its resources to actively challenge racist structures and racial inequities.

As the City continues its redress journey, it is with the understanding that redress itself is expansive – with no one specific definition, and that redress, in this context, must be approached through the perspectives of Host Nations and the communities seeking redress. To this end, the overall activities continue to be linked to the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Calls to Action, Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, *Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*, the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, *BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, *United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the *BC Human Rights Code*, wherever possible. Collectively, these reports and commitments outline the need for processes that are both community-driven and collaborative.

Historical Overview

South Asian Canadians have a long, vibrant and evocative history in British Columbia and in Vancouver. When looking at the South Asian Canadian communities that make up Vancouver today, the intersectionality and diversity of the sub-groups must be carefully taken into account. This intersectionality encompasses geographical demographics, different languages, dialects, religions, race, gender, caste, age, sexual orientation, immigration status and ability among others. The countries which make up South Asia are vast and include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In addition, many South Asians moved abroad including during the violent partition in India in 1947, as well as indentured labourers for the expanding plantations or railways of East and Central Africa, Malaysia, South Africa, Fiji, the Caribbean and South America.

South Asian immigrants first arrived in Canada in the late 1800s seeking opportunities, including decent wages to support themselves and their families back home. Their history in Vancouver showcases connections to many local cultural and historically significant events and places as well as their continued activism and resilience as they faced intense racism, challenged many forms of oppression and fought for human rights. There are many occurrences where the City of Vancouver, including previous Mayor, Council and leadership, were directly involved in perpetrating racial injustices on South Asian Canadian communities, such as supporting oppression and denying the right to vote in Vancouver, which directly led to the right to vote federally also being revoked. It took 40 years of lobbying and protesting by the South Asian Canadian community to get the right to vote back. The City also supported oppressive and restrictive immigration laws and promoted anti-Asian sentiments. The long history of discrimination highlights the profound weight, importance and need for the City's anti-racism and cultural redress work for the South Asian Canadian communities to continue through a community led approach. *For further details see Appendix A.*

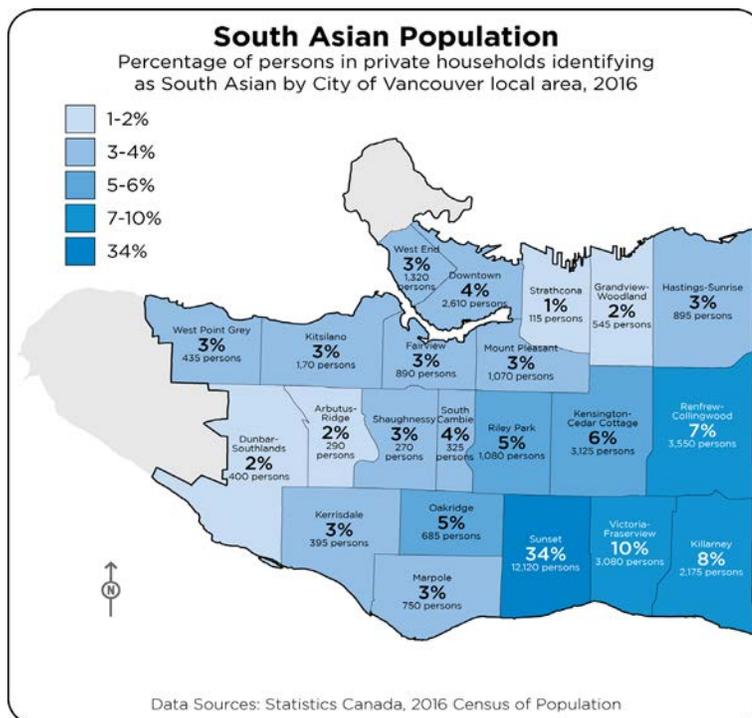
South Asian Canadian Demographic Data

The South Asian Canadian population in Vancouver is growing. According to the 2016 Census, there was a 43% increase in the South Asian Canadian population in Vancouver from 1996-

2016. With over 37,000 residents in Vancouver and over 291,000 across the broader Metro Vancouver region, making up 6% and 12% of the total population respectively.

Within the Vancouver's local areas, South Asian Canadian residents make up the largest share of the population in south-eastern neighbourhoods, especially in the Sunset area with over 12,000 South Asian residents in 2016. Relatively large South Asian Canadian populations also live in other east-side neighbourhoods such as Renfrew-Collingwood and Kensington-Cedar Cottage, and a large and growing population lives in the downtown area as well. The 2016 census documented at least 61 different languages spoken by South Asian residents.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone in the city, but some groups experience disproportionate impacts. Based on the BC Centre for Disease Control, COVID SPEAK Survey, conducted during the pandemic (April-May 2021), impacts on South Asian populations in Vancouver include:



- South Asian respondents were less likely to be employed in jobs that provided sick leave, with 54% of respondents indicating they did not have leave.
- South Asian respondents were more likely to report being stressed than other respondents (30% of respondents) and having poor mental health (41%).
- In spring 2021, South Asian residents were among the groups in Vancouver most likely to report being concerned for their own health (37% of respondents) and for a family member's health (72%).
- 20% of South Asian respondents reported experiencing increased racism during the pandemic; although lower compared to other racialized groups, this was higher compared to the overall population.
- 43% of South Asian respondents reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace.

The statistics outlined above highlight some of the inequities that South Asian Canadian communities experience and the detrimental impacts on these communities' wellbeing. As a City that is committed to creating equitable outcomes for all communities, a targeted focus on redress for past injustices and addressing current inequities are needed to foster a sense of belonging and wellbeing for South Asian Canadian communities. Concrete steps using a racial justice approach are needed to close existing gaps that reduce intersectional marginalization and systemic racism towards South Asian Canadians. *See Appendix B for further details.*

Process to date

Addressing historical discrimination and working toward cultural redress for the many distinct subgroups within the South Asian Canadian communities in Vancouver will require a long-term multi-phased approach to allow time to build trust with the City, for broad community engagement, and healing. The process to date and recommended initial actions are described below.

Engaging South Asian Canadian Communities

While one-time funding was approved in the 2020 budget to advance work on this motion, due to the onset of COVID, it was in October 2021 that City staff began initial conversations with community members, including local historians and leaders, on considerations related to the motion, including an apology, potential actions related to redress, and to address ongoing racism. In January 2022, staff convened a Community Advisory Group of 15 members, consisting of key stakeholders from South Asian communities including seniors, academics, historians, researchers, students, artists, professionals, business and community leaders. To make the initial engagement accessible to South Asian Canadian women, mainly elders, staff were invited to attend the South Asian Women's Group set up by South Vancouver Neighbourhood House at the Sunset Community Centre where those present could share their perspectives in their language, Punjabi or Hindi. Staff also reached out to key advisors for their specific expertise, community connections or guidance. Overall, the people involved are individuals with lived experience of discrimination and racism and with multiple intersecting identities, including race, gender, class, age, sexual orientation and ability among others. See *Appendix C* for additional details on the Community Advisory Group and key advisors.

To assist with the process, staff contracted a part-time Research Assistant from the South Asian community who spoke English, Punjabi and Hindi to provide support with preliminary historical research on South Asian Canadian communities. The research assistant also supported the project by conducting individual interviews with advisory members and gathering current data. The Community Advisory Group met once a month for two hours from January to May 2022, and accomplished the following:

- i. Reviewed and shared primary and secondary documentation on historical policies and practices of discrimination against people of South Asian Canadian descent in Vancouver and had space to share lived experiences and stories;
- ii. Provided input on process for preliminary research, future public engagement session(s) as well as on the approach and format;
- iii. Identified initial actions while we plan to address current discrimination facing South Asian Canadians in Vancouver today; and
- iv. Recommended steps and actions that the City could take to acknowledge past harms and provide redress for South Asian Canadian communities, including future strategies for ensuring that these harms do not reoccur in the future.

The Community Advisory Group has expressed the value of this work in beginning to repair broken relationships and build trust between the City and South Asian Canadian communities. Having a South Asian Canadian, Punjabi and Hindi speaking staff member at the City dedicated to working on anti-racism and redress for these communities has made this trust building process possible; at this initial phase of the work, having this representation and contact person with whom the advisory group can build a relationship and share their ideas and concerns with has been valuable. It is a step towards connecting with disenfranchised South Asian Canadian

communities that have had inadequate access to City leadership, employment opportunities, and influence and power. The Community Advisory Group has also emphasized that this redress journey must allow the community time and sufficient resources and staff support to develop and offer recommendations, share their stories, and build trust in order for healing to begin at a safe, respectful, and community led pace.

Strategic Analysis

Formal Apology and Redress

The Community Advisory Group agreed that prior to the City of Vancouver issuing a formal public apology, South Asian Canadian communities need to see the City's full commitment to redress of past harms by supporting, funding and carrying through recommendations from the interim and final reports. The plans for a future public acknowledgement and apology can then be reflected on during the larger engagement sessions with the many diverse groups that make up the South Asian Canadian communities in Vancouver.

Areas of Interest for Exploration

The Community Advisory Group have identified the following initial areas of interest for further consideration. These areas of focus reflect the potential to remedy the impacts of historic discrimination such as: lack of recognition of the value of South Asian Canadian communities' tangible and intangible traditions; historic under-representation in community processes; historic lack of access to influence and power; and other impacts of systemic racism and discrimination, such as under-representation in leadership and public governance.

Economic Development:

- Invest in cultural food protection, increasing availability and supporting existing struggling South Asian Canadian grocery stores, markets, and food programs
- Increased economic support for South Asian Canadian businesses and arts and culture including place-making spaces that actively celebrate and centres South Asian Canadian experiences
- Increase granting support to all IBPOC communities including South Asian Canadian communities - organizations and grassroots programs - while providing direct outreach to South Asian Canadian communities about City grants processes, such as grants availability, applications and deadlines
- Capital investments in youth development and international student support initiatives where youth get a fair and equal chance for a life free from racism, marginalization and discrimination in Vancouver
- Support seniors, struggling families, new arrivals to Canada, LGBTQ2+ and international students with economic, social and housing support as well as increasing outreach, ease of access and information about City services
- Study, mitigate and share risks of further displacement on South Asian Canadian communities and businesses

Human Resources:

- Review Human Resources policies including recruitment, hiring, promotion and training at the City to increase South Asian Canadian and all IBPOC communities representation in staff and leadership roles at the City

- Implementing the recommendations arising from the anticipated final recommendations will require sustained effort over many years to both implement programs and actions, maintain liaison and engagement with the community, and ensure accountability of follow-through for the community. The City must identify ongoing staff to maintain these relationships and ensure work proceeds and any Council-approved commitments are met.

Outreach:

- Increase and support South Asian Canadian community partnerships including with program development, grants, place-making and cultural initiatives
- Increase outreach and engagement with South Asian Canadian media outlets to address gaps in our communication and current practices to better share news on crucial issues concerning South Asian Canadian's everyday life challenges as 'immigrant communities'
- Work in partnership with South Asian Canadian community organizations to provide key/relevant information and in popular languages spoken by South Asian Canadian communities

Policing:

- Assist with setting up consultations and advocating to address racist practices and harmful racial stereotypes which are potentially used as a way to conduct policing in the community. Address on-going racism, discrimination and for building police education in creating culturally led policies and practices, changes to data collection and reporting, and the creation of a South Asian Canadian Police Community Advisory Committee to address community concerns

The areas of interest above are broad and so will require further scoping and prioritization over the next phase of work as well as consideration in light of feedback received through broader community engagement. Feedback from community, such as recommendations regarding policing, are often outside of the jurisdiction of the City. However the City does assist communities by sharing their feedback with the institutions responsible.

Next Steps

1) Research, Data & Collaboration

Research will include review of City policies and procedures, gathering historical information, lived experiences of racism from elders, descendants of early pioneers in the South Asian Canadian communities and newcomers. Analysis of trends including displacement and erasure of communities, for example the erasure of South Asian Canadian communities in the Kitsilano area, will also be conducted. Staff should explore collaborations with South Asian Canadian organizations, educational institutions, community historians, researchers and other levels of government which includes but is not limited to South Asian Studies Institute at University of Fraser Valley, University of British Columbia Asian Studies, Provincial Government's South Asian Museum of BC project, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver Archives, Vancouver Maritimes Museum, the Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver Land Titles Office and the Government of BC's Multicultural and Anti-racism office.

Research will also take into account the way laws, policies and regulations were implemented and the impact that had on South Asian Canadian communities. Some laws were explicitly racist

while others may not have been inherently racist but the way in which they were implemented was discriminatory and racist.

2) Broader Community Engagement, Outreach and Education

Further culturally appropriate and safe community engagement within the very diverse South Asian Canadian communities groups is needed. This engagement must be mindful of the varying levels of trust, histories of trauma and marginalisation and consultation fatigue within communities. This engagement will also need to take into account generational loss and the impact that this has had on communities. It will be a space to listen, have dialogues and address areas of concern that require City support.

City engagement with the larger South Asian Canadian communities prior to the 2019 Council motion has been minimal and was often done with a small group, limited in scope when considering the large intersectionality and diversity of the groups who make up South Asian Canadian communities. This intersectionality calls for multiple culturally appropriate consultations with the many identities and sub-groups.

Engagement Considerations

The Community Advisory Group has shared that the City's engagement strategy must reflect the need to reach out to various community groups in culturally safe spaces with educational and research components for those who may be less familiar with the historical discrimination that took place. Sessions should provide translators and information in multiple languages, accessible spaces, have cultural considerations, be respectful of cultural and sub-cultural practices and be community-led with facilitators leading sessions with City staff present.

Additional recommendations for engagement sessions from the Advisory Group include:

- Inviting Vancouver's host nations to engagement sessions with the community for guidance and collaboration
- Smaller group sessions for specific sub-groups
 - Initial subgroups that have been identified include, but are not limited to, religious groups (Ismaili, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian communities), the 2SLGBTQ2+, elderly women, elderly men, children, youth, stay at home moms, international students, and new immigrants. This addresses the concern that there are a lot of voices that are unheard or may not be comfortable to speak in larger mixed sessions
- Information booths at South Asian events, places of worship and post-secondary institutions
- Large open invitation sessions at Sunset Community Centre
- Partnering with South Asian organizations and businesses to conduct outreach on their social media channels
- Engaging and relationship building with South Asian media outlets to spread awareness and inform communities of the date and time of sessions
- To have a multi-jurisdictional approach with Metro Vancouver cities and inter-governmental involvement to ensure collaboration on anti-racism, redress and South Asian Canadian communities initiatives and projects

Education on the historical discrimination that the South Asian Canadian communities faced and its impact requires an expansive public education and awareness campaign which could also be shared to educate the community during engagement sessions. This education should also explore the negative impacts of anti-South Asian Canadian racism, including generational impacts, mental illness, substance abuse and violence.

3) Refinement of Final Recommendations to Council

Once research is conducted and assessed, further engagement results assessed, staff will work with the Community Advisory Group to identify and prioritize meaningful and impactful actions that recognize the impacts of historic discrimination.

4) Initial Actions While Planning

While there is further work to undertake, the Community Advisory Group has identified initial priority action areas including:

- i. Exploring what steps and resources may be needed in potentially designating Punjabi Market as a historically and culturally significant area.*
- ii. Conducting further research and engagement to identify key areas of cultural and historical significance to the many sub-groups of the South Asian Communities, including the erasure of the history of South Asian Canadian communities in the Kitsilano area.*
- iii. Creating and preserving the multiple South Asian Canadian community spaces in Vancouver due to erasure and loss of cultural heritage. This includes areas for the community to gather for meetings, engagement, gatherings, cultural events and creative initiatives.*

Spaces and the vision that need to be further explored during community consultations include a potential cultural centre which could serve as a cultural hub for arts, exhibits, theatre, social programs, gatherings and more.

- iv. Prioritizing the secondary street re-naming after the Komagata Maru in alignment and following the completion of the Commemoration Policy.*

Staff can begin to explore the potential for an art and educational piece that recognizes the area around the 2nd Avenue Gurdwara, the first Sikh Gurdwara in Canada, which was built in 1908. It was the forefront for social justice campaigns supporting the Komagata Maru and regaining the right to vote for South Asian Canadians in 1947, as well as a historic spiritual, political, economic and social hub for South Asian Canadians of all faiths. Ideas for how the community would like this to be recognized would need to be discussed further at broader engagement sessions.

Timeline

The timeline for completing the final report is still uncertain and will be influenced by the approach to the broader public engagement. Staff will keep Council updated on progress through memo updates.

Public/Civic Agency Input

Below are some direct comments from the Community Advisory Group in response to the work to date:

I am grateful to the City of Vancouver for recognizing the need for anti-racism and redress work for the South Asian Canadian Community. I am certain that the larger South Asian Community will also share my sentiments when learning that the City is committing to do its part in righting the wrongs perpetrated through systemic and overt racism and discrimination. However, I urge the City to not mistake our gratitude as a box that has been “ticked”, or as an achievement in itself. This work is long overdue. The real achievements will be won by the City taking concrete action and dedicating the necessary resources that will allow for the City and the Community to align on the requests in this Initial Report. In particular, the City must recognize that there are hundreds of years of systemic discrimination (recorded and unrecorded) committed against several different sub-cultures and sub-communities that comprise the South Asian Canadian Community. These findings will ultimately impact what has been highlighted in this Initial Report. Accordingly, it is essential that the City match its resources and timelines to the amount of work that will be required to unpack and assess these historical wrongs. At a minimum, we will require further human resources to carry out research and outreach – and ultimately, we will require a task force that can concretely implement the requests in this Initial Report, and any other redress work that is identified along the way.

If the City is committed to providing a meaningful apology to the South Asian Canadian Community, the foundational work cannot be rushed or carried out haphazardly. Ultimately, I ask the City and Council to provide the necessary flexibility, time, financial support and grace to allow for the cultivation of thoughtful actions which will truly heal the Community, and at least try to undo hundreds of years of racism and discrimination.

Harmanpreet Kaur Bains

The effort initiated by the City of Vancouver to both acknowledge wrongs experienced by the South Asian Community and seek insight from community leaders on actions that can begin to reverse the impacts, is praiseworthy. However, it is important to bear in mind that though there were specific instances when the South Asian Community and other racialized communities were marginalized due to law, regulations, and policies, an acknowledgement of these discriminatory practices will bring some reconciliation. What often times is less considered and needs attending to is the understanding that due to these deliberate systemic barriers, the South Asian [Canadian] Community throughout decades, has suffered an immeasurable erasure of their arts, language, heritage and traditions. In order to recompense for this loss and afford the community an opportunity to recover these lost treasures, support for South Asian arts, heritage and language projects in the City of Vancouver, will bring far greater value than any empty apology or recognition of wrongs done to the SA community.

Insp. Baltej S. Dhillon (Ret.) Hon. LLD, .C.Dir.

I'm honoured to be part of this work and to be able to have input in these conversations. Ari and Preet have been a pleasure to work with and they're both doing an excellent job handing all of this with care and compassion.

It's important to give the community ample time for this work. There have been decades of wrongs committed against South Asians, but to only give essentially several weeks to work on this isn't enough time to do it right. Having a phased approach will help.

I also think having a diversity of voices, perspectives and age groups will help. For example for myself, being 37, I have a certain amount of experience and learned history, but there are many elders who faced racism first-hand and at a different time. Their voices are also important to include.

Jag Nagra

Being a part of this Advisory Committee gave me a moment of pause to reflect on the history of South Asian discrimination in the city. This moment of reflection and the discussions we have had are significant to me because we were able to recognize how despite the strides being made to bring injustices to light, the scars left in our community are deep and the intergenerational trauma of these experiences are still very much relevant. Thus our conclusion that a long-term commitment and support to this work is necessary shows a collective push to reinvent what an "apology" by the city should look like, and I believe it's an opportunity to get the input of the wider South Asian community.

Humna Khan

Discrimination towards the South Asian diaspora isn't exclusively historic, it is happening today. Even in death, our forefathers are subject to the violent humiliation of hate — as evidenced by the August 2021 defacement of the Komagata Maru Memorial. A hundred years after the fact, their souls still cannot, "rest in peace."

A few months before that incident, Bloomberg appointed the City of Vancouver, the "Asian Hate Crime Capital of North America," a title that is readily apparent for anyone that is interfaced with the relatively analog networks that characterize our communities — where face-to-face, in-person meetings holds more weight than a barrage of Instagram likes and retweets. Our communities are worried, our communities are dispirited, but our communities are resilient.

When I was asked to join the committee charged with helping uncover and address the City of Vancouver's role in the Historic Discrimination of South Asians, I was hopeful that we might finally be able find justice for our community. It quickly dawned on me, however, that we had been set up to fail. Our committee was given six months, and limited resources, in order to uncover injustices that span a century — is that justice?

For this process to work, our community needs more time, more resources, and to connect with our past, present & future. That means that our community needs the City to appoint permanent staff to this project. That way, our community can begin to crystallize our history in Kitsilano, where it has almost entirely been erased, and in the Punjabi Market, where its erasure is ongoing.

For this process to mean anything, it is time that the City get behind a South Asian cultural centre. A beacon for Vancouverite's old and new. A place where our intangible and tangible heritage can be preserved and shared with our neighbours and our communities.

For this process to heal wounds, this work requires that we interface with other communities, instead of working in a silo. If our community is to heal, we cannot do it alone. We are quite aware that our liberation from hatefulness lies in the resource intensive process of building bridges. Our question is: are you?

*Gulzar Nanda, Chair, Punjabi
Market Collective*

The work of the project to address Historical Discrimination against People of South Asian decent is critically important for us all as British Columbians and we are grateful for Council's leadership as the City of Vancouver takes a lead role for a long term commitment. As an immigrant to the land of the Sto:lo peoples I am constantly reminded of my role as a social being in transforming our societies for the better. While as a person of colour I too have been discriminated against many times, I have taken the path of resistance and activism as one embedded in social justice. Research has been able to quench somewhat a lifelong thirst for information, knowledge and history about my people for the full and honest Canadian record. Heritage, culture, history, language etc., are mainstays in all our communities and the benefits of doing community placed work by preserving tangible and intangible heritage is critical for us. A sense of belonging can only be harnessed and appreciated when spaces can be claimed as collective responses to that sense in a way that is inclusive, diverse and equitable. I appreciate the work of Council to respond with anti-racism initiatives and to redress past wrongs in a way that honours the legacy of perseverance and fortitude against all odds in the City and Province by people of South Asian decent since the early 1900's – a decade plus ago.

Dr. Satwinder Bains

This anti-racism and redress work the City is doing for the South Asian Canadian community is important to me because I represent a minority within the South Asian Canadian Community and I welcome the opportunity to sit on the Advisory Board in order to offer a voice not only for my Indo-Fijian community but also for to the other Indian diasporic communities which often get lost within the larger South Asian population of the Lower Mainland.

The term "South Asian" is unique in that it not only encapsulates a region of the world and its inhabitants, but also groups into it, an entire race of people from throughout the world, who share an Indian heritage. But here in Vancouver (and in the Metro Vancouver area in general) the term "South Asian" is better identified with people from the Punjab region of India and more often than not, of a Sikh background. It is important that all Indian diasporic communities are represented in this redress work and their struggles, histories and cultures be acknowledged.

Rizwaan S. Abbas, BA, PSc, MSc.

People who committed historical discrimination and the injustices of the past are long gone. An apology for the past is the right thing to do today but it should be understood by the present day politicians and the policymakers that they have a great responsibility to provide a 'level playing field'. We are not asking any special treatment, just a level playing field.

It will be good to live in a society where our differences are celebrated. Diversity and variety in approach to life makes our whole society richer and stronger.

Dave Mann

While public apologies for historical wrongs are often the product of political arithmetic and pragmatism (particularly, in an election year), in my view, such acts of confession and contrition can promote a sense of trust and assurance that history will not repeat itself as well as communicate a striving for a common future. Though the gesture will be symbolic and aspirational, to prove its sincerity it must be accompanied by both a well-researched and comprehensive factual foundation, as well as a commitment to taking real-action and concrete steps for the future. From my perspective, the poetics of this apology should celebrate the community's resilience in the face of a system of racial hierarchy that was sustained consciously and unconsciously; it ought not to cast blame or shame, but rather focus on bringing awareness of the past in order to nurture a collective commitment for repair and renewal in the present and into future.

It is important to acknowledge that this apology may also trigger memories of culturally unsafe personal experiences or experiences of friends, family and the community. It certainly did for me, as has my involvement in a number of other recent anti-racism initiatives such as my presentation at "Shaping Identity and Data Collection", a virtual event hosted by the Province of British Columbia in collaboration with the South Asian Legal Clinic, as well as my engagement by the Trial Lawyers Association of British Columbia to produce a report with recommendations on an action-oriented strategy to infuse equity, diversity, and inclusion into the core values of the organization. Participating in these initiatives and on this advisory committee, has been an opportunity to reflect on my own personal journey, an aspect of which I will share below.

My maternal roots in British Columbia are 120 years old and date back to my great-grandfather's arrival in 1906. Disenfranchised and disenchanted by the overt and systemic racism, he was inspired by the Ghadar movement to overthrow British Rule which sprouted on the West Coast of North America among Punjabi-Sikhs and other Indian-origin British subjects. He returned to Punjab to fight for the cause, becoming one of five Jathedars (leaders) of the Babbar-Akali independence movement. He served a total of six years as a guest of Her Majesty in British jails for a variety of political offences, ranging from involvement in unlawful publications that described British exploitation of India and Indians abroad and making speeches against the Crown. As my great-grandfather's revolutionary career took root in Punjab, my grandfather was smuggled to British Columbia as a 13 year-old, where he eventually became a community organizer and the first Punjabi-Sikh union delegate in B.C.

My father came to Canada in 1976. He was a lawyer in Hoshiarpur, Punjab, but at the time, there was no mechanism by which to have his Indian law degree recognized. Without the means to pursue a law degree here and after receiving many rejection letters for employment based on "over-qualification", he became an entrepreneur and

eventually one of the first Punjabi-origin Notary Publics in B.C. His office was located in the Punjabi Market in South Vancouver where he and my mother worked together; he as a Notary and my mother as an insurance agent.

I was born 40 years ago and grew up in the Golden Age of the Punjabi Market (and hip hop) in the 1980s and 90s, reared on stories of my maternal roots in British Columbia, as well as my paternal grandfather who was a World War II veteran and an active member of the Royal Canadian Legion, South Vancouver Branch. I spent most of my time outside of school with my parents in the office, where their clients were (almost) exclusively South Asian. That was a water-shed era in the socio-economic, cultural and political history of the South Asian community. It was also a watershed more broadly as it was also 40 years ago that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was proclaimed. It was also a period of moral panic in which the media vilified the “Indo-Canadian” community for extremism, gang violence and selective enforcement by the police. I saw hallmarks of the police attitude from an earlier era rear their ugly head last year with the wrongful arrest of Retired Supreme Court Justice Hon. Selwyn Romilly by the Vancouver Police Department, which prompted me to write an open letter (which was later picked up by local media as an op-ed) to the City of Vancouver and the VPD, with the support of several legal organizations, in which I pointed out that in 1974, Selwyn Romilly’s younger brother (who was a lawyer and future provincial court judge) had also been wrongfully arrested by the VPD for the same reason. This event was a painful reminder that history can repeat itself. From my perspective, it is critical to document historical wrongs in order to create a foundation for future prevention.

My family and I are deeply committed to this City and its future. After receiving my undergraduate and first law degree from UBC, I started my career as a Crown prosecutor in the trenches of 222 Main Street. I then took a leave of absence from the Crown office to obtain a Masters of Laws from Columbia University in New York, and upon my return in 2010, decided to start my own law firm – Narwal Litigation LLP – in Downtown Vancouver. For the past 10 years, I have served as an Adjunct Professor at the UBC Allard School of Law and in 2016, I served as the first visible minority President of the Vancouver Bar Association (“VBA”) in its 124+ year history. In addition to these roles, I serve as a member of the Judicial Council of the Tsawwassen First Nation. While my career is embedded in Vancouver, most important is the reality that my wife (who is also my law partner and a prominent member of the bar who served as the first female visible minority president of the VBA in 2018 and is presently a sitting bencher of the Law Society of BC in Vancouver County and the chair of the LSBC’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee) and I have chosen to raise our son in Vancouver and we hope this City will strive to make every effort to eradicate systemic racism now and into the future.

Joven Narwal

On behalf of the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society, in which there are 15 families all over Canada who are direct descendants of the passengers (children, grandchildren or great grandchildren). We have been advocating and waiting since March 2018 for the secondary street re-naming after the Komagata Maru in memory of the Komagata Maru’s passengers. We have suffered in losing loved ones and deeply share the pain of our parents, grandparents, or great grandparents being rejected and discriminated against by Canada in 1914. The Descendants families, the South Asian

community as well as many other Canadians would appreciate the City moving forward with this secondary street re-naming.

*Raj Singh Toor, Vice President/Spokesperson,
Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society*

Staff express their sincere appreciation for the Advisory Committee and Advisors' openness, time and candour through this first phase of work.

Staff have yet to engage Council's Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee or other Committees related to this work. This engagement is anticipated as part of the next phase of work.

Financial Implications

Current work of responding to the specific motion is funded from a one-time allocation in the 2020 operating budget of \$200,000. Further resources are required to undertake further engagement, complete the required research, work with the Community Advisory Group to finalize recommendations, and advance work on the three recommended Action While Planning priorities.

\$75,000 project funding and funding to support extension of the assigned Planner have been allocated to support the continuation of the work described in this report, source of funds 2022 ACCS operating budget. The one-time project funds will be allocated to support further research, community engagement, or other process work identified by the Planner in consultation with the Advisory group.

Staff will identify resources necessary and prepare a funding strategy as part of the 2023 annual budget process. Council will need to approve any additional funding for this initiative through deprioritizing an existing initiative or approve additional property tax.

Staff will also explore advocacy and collaboration with the provincial and federal governments including applying for anti-racism and redress funds to continue this work.

As noted above, implementing any recommendations arising from the final recommendations (i.e., in the future report) will require sustained effort over many years to both implement programs and actions, maintain liaison and engagement with the community, and ensure accountability of follow-through for the community. When staff present the final recommendations, staff will also bring forward recommended resource requirements to maintain relationships and liaison with community and ensure work proceeds and any Council-approved commitments are met.

CONCLUSION

With the start of this integral historical discrimination against people of South Asian Canadian descent cultural redress and anti-racism work, the City was able to make space to open the dialogue and build new relationships between a small group of people within the larger South Asian Canadian communities. The continuation of this work will support further research, implementation of a large scale engagement process that allows the voices of diverse groups within these communities to be heard and for continued trust building.

* * * * *

Appendix A: Historical Overview

South Asian Canadians have a long, vibrant and evocative history in British Columbia and in Vancouver. When looking at the South Asian Canadian communities that make up Vancouver today, the intersectionality and diversity of the sub-groups must be carefully taken into account. This intersectionality encompasses geographical demographics, different languages, dialects, religions, race, gender, caste, age, sexual orientation, immigration status and ability among others. The countries which make up South Asia are vast and include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Many South Asians moved abroad including during the violent partition in India in 1947, as well as indentured labourers for the expanding plantations or railways of East and Central Africa, Malaysia, South Africa, Fiji, the Caribbean and South America.

South Asian immigrants first arrived in Canada in the late 1800s seeking opportunities, including decent wages to support themselves and their families back home. Their history in Vancouver showcases connections to many local cultural and historically significant events and places as well as their continued activism and resilience as they faced intense racism, challenged many forms of oppression and fought for human rights. South Asian Canadians are made up of hard working communities who have generously supported philanthropy, stood up against injustices and contribute to making Canada a safe, prosperous and better place for all.

95% of all South Asian immigrants to Canada from 1904 to the 1940s were Sikhs from the Punjab region of India. As immigration laws slowly began to change from 1940s to 1970s, immigration to Canada from all South Asian countries steadily increased which included people from various faith groups including Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and many others. The first five Sikh Punjabi immigrants arrived in Vancouver in the summer of 1903 and their numbers slowly grew. Most of the men who arrived worked in the forestry, fishing and railway industries. Despite having great work ethic, these men earned much less than the wages received by workers of European descent. As the South Asian population increased so did a great deal of racial tension and the municipal, provincial and federal governments took notice by implementing restrictive laws and policies that would create many barriers for South Asian people. It became difficult for South Asian men to find jobs, many were laid off, evicted from homes, prevented from entering public facilities, endured physical abuse by the police, and faced negative public scrutiny by the local press and media. This also led to a rise in the formation of racist and exclusionary groups including the Asiatic Exclusion League, (Asian Exclusion League), of which the Mayor of Vancouver, Alexander Bethune and some Council members were founding and active members. This group went on to lead one of the most serious race-riots in Canadian history known as the anti-Asian riots of 1907.

Preliminary research from the period of 1904-present highlights numerous examples of racism and injustices that violate human rights mainly to centre the need to preserve whiteness and the colonial frame of thinking; protecting the “White Man’s Province”. Additionally, there are many occurrences where the City of Vancouver including previous Mayor, Council and leadership were directly involved in perpetrating these injustices on South Asian Canadian communities including supporting oppression and denying the right to vote in Vancouver, which directly led to the right to vote federally also being revoked. It then took 40 years of lobbying and protesting by the South Asian community to get the right to vote back. The City also supported oppressive and restrictive immigration laws and promoted anti-Asian sentiments. This brief summary of historic discrimination highlights the profound weight, importance and need for the City’s anti-

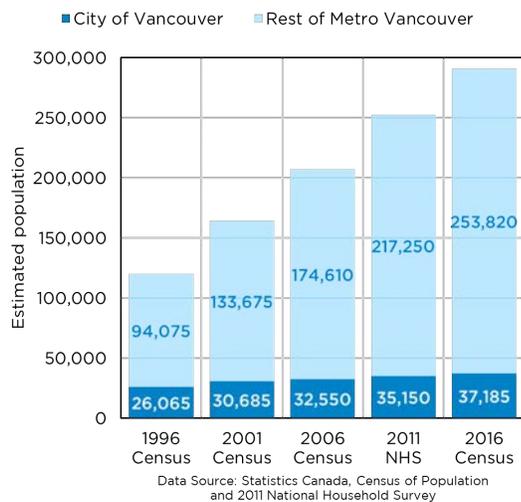
racism and cultural redress work for the South Asian Canadian communities to continue through a community led approach.

Appendix B:

Profile of South Asian residents of Vancouver

Please note that in Appendix C, South Asian Canadians will be identified as 'South Asian' to ensure accuracy and align with the Statistics Canada data in this section.

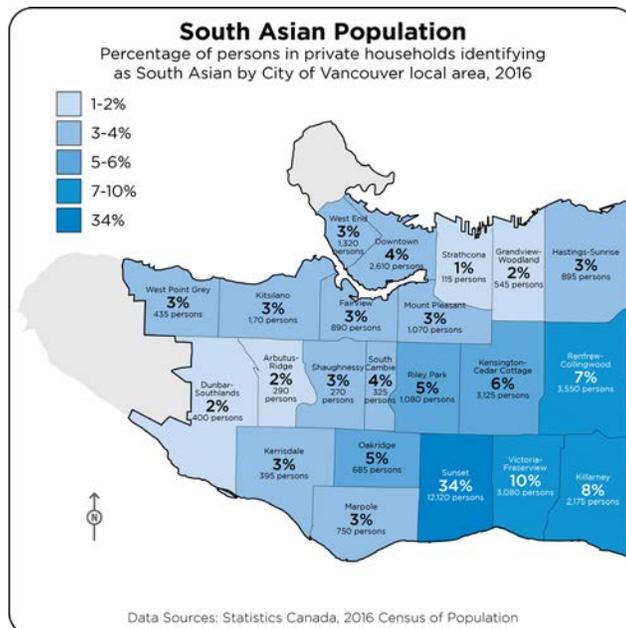
South Asian Population Estimated in Census Program, 1996-2016



Population counts

As of the 2016 Census,¹ there are over 37,000 South Asian residents of the City of Vancouver (making up 6% of the total city population), and 291,000 across the broader Metro Vancouver region (12% of the total). These numbers are based on self-identification in population group categories used by Statistics Canada.

The South Asian population is growing at a faster rate than the overall population in Vancouver. However, growth is much faster in other parts of Metro Vancouver. From 1996 to 2016 the South Asian population in Vancouver has increased by 43%, and the population in Metro Vancouver overall increased by 142%.



¹ The 2016 Census is the most current data source available. Data from the 2021 Census on racial identity, ethnicity and immigration will be released on October 26, 2022. Further tabulations and custom data, such as neighbourhood population counts, will become available in 2023.

Across Metro Vancouver, the proportionally largest South Asian populations are in the cities of Surrey (33% of the population) and Delta (20%). South Asian residents also make up a larger share of the population in New Westminister, Burnaby and Richmond than in Vancouver. However, in absolute numbers Vancouver has the second largest South Asian population in the region, after Surrey.

Within Vancouver’s local areas, South Asian residents make up the largest share of the population in southeastern neighbourhoods, especially Sunset. Relatively large South Asian populations also live in other east-side neighbourhoods such as Renfrew-Collingwood and Kensington-Cedar Cottage, and a large and growing population lives downtown as well.

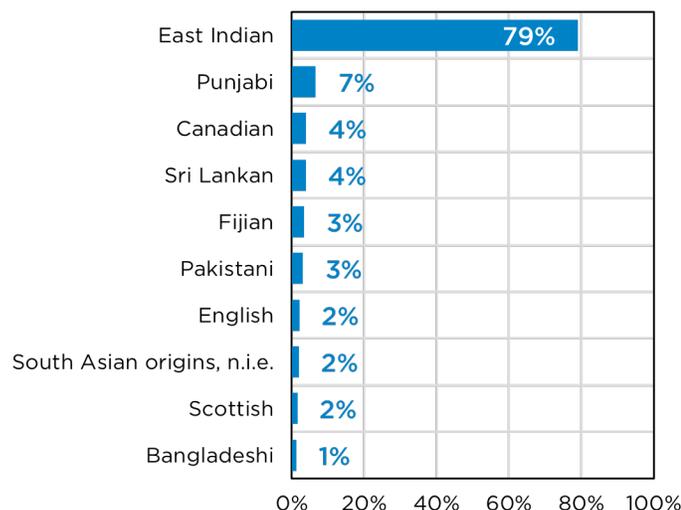
Population characteristics and intersecting identities²

The South Asian population in Vancouver is slightly younger than the overall population. Median age in 2016 is 36 years, compared to 39 for the overall population. The South Asian population has proportionally more children and fewer seniors than the overall population, and a relatively large population of male young adults (age 25-34).

Race, ethnicity and immigration are all distinct aspects of people’s identities. 79% of South Asian residents identified Indian ethnic or cultural origins. However, people also identified many other origins, or multiple origins.

61% of South Asian residents are first-generation Canadians; they were born outside of Canada and live in Vancouver as citizens, permanent residents or people with work or study permits. 35% are second-generation, with at least one parent born outside of Canada. 4% are third-or-more-generation, with both parents born in Canada.

**City of Vancouver:
Top Reported Cultural Origins
for South Asian Population, 2016**



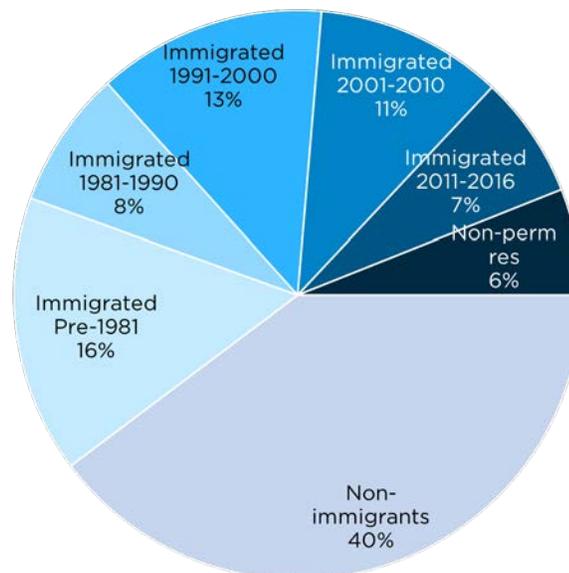
Data Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, custom table accessed through Community Data Program

² Data in this and the following section from Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, target group profiles and custom tabulations accessed through Community Data Program.

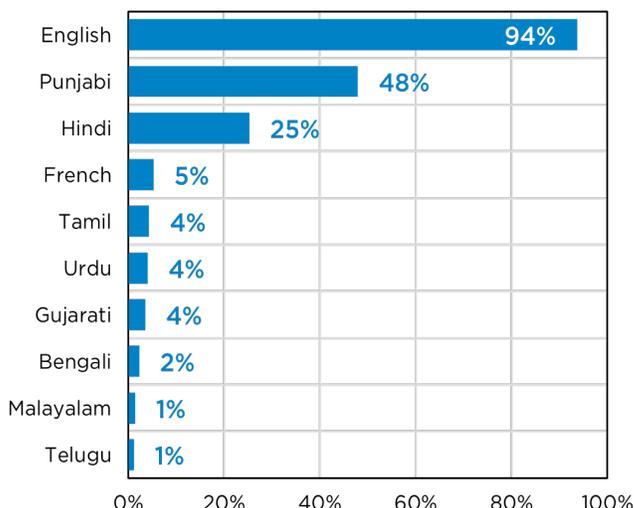
South Asian residents who are immigrants have been coming to Canada for decades. A majority of South Asian residents in Vancouver were either born in Canada or immigrated prior to 1981, at least 35 years prior to the most recent census.

Among South Asian immigrants (citizens and permanent residents) living in Vancouver, almost 12,400 were born in India; 2,100 were born in Oceania; 1,300 were born in Sri Lanka; and 900 were born in Pakistan.

**City of Vancouver:
South Asian Population by
Immigration Status, 2016**



**City of Vancouver:
Top languages known by
South Asian population, 2016**



Data Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, custom table accessed through Community Data Program

In the 2016 census, at least 61 different languages are spoken by South Asian residents. 94% of South Asian residents have a conversational knowledge of English, a higher percentage than for the overall population. 48% of South Asian residents have a conversational knowledge of Punjabi, and 25% have knowledge of Hindi.

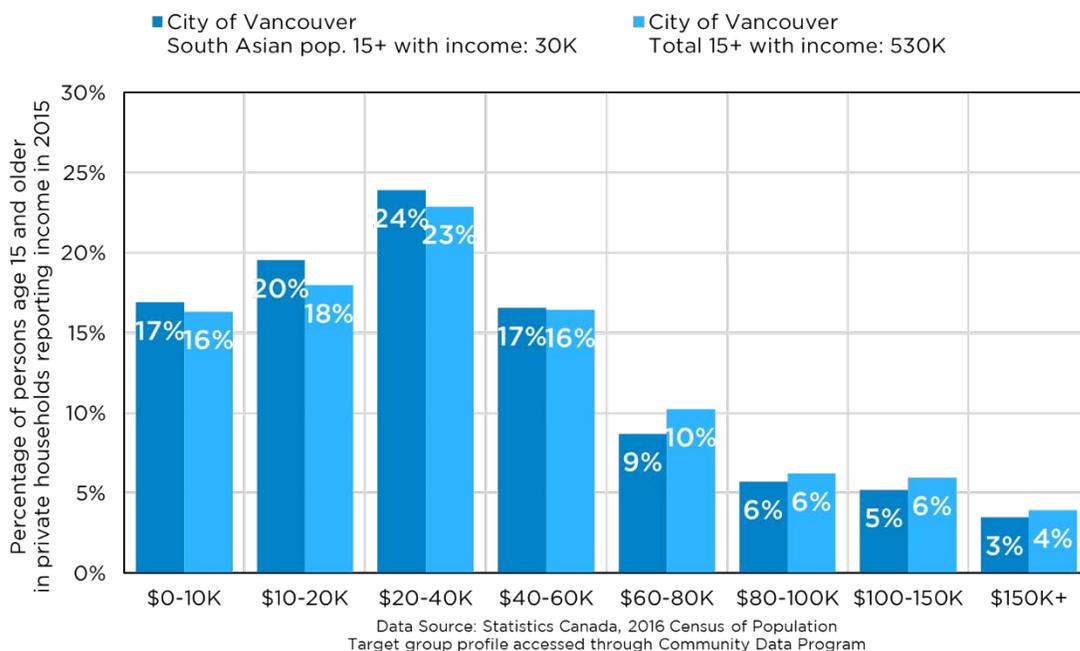
62% of South Asian residents have a non-English mother tongue, and another 7% report both English and another language. 34% of South Asian residents usually use a non-English language at home, and another 16% use both English and another language.

Income, housing and employment

15% of South Asian residents in Vancouver have incomes below the national poverty line, a lower rate than for the overall population in the city. However, median income is also lower for this population: individual income among South Asian people 15 and older has a median of \$30,600, about 7% lower than for the city's overall population.

The income distribution for South Asian residents is broadly similar to the population as a whole, but with proportionally fewer people in the highest income categories and more in more modest income categories

Distribution of Total Personal Income, 2016



Only limited data is currently available on the family and household situations of South Asian residents in Vancouver; further datasets could explore indicators such as multigenerational families. However, some high-level housing indicators are available:

- 65% of South Asian residents of Vancouver live in owner-occupied housing, compared to 55% of the overall population. South Asian residents born in Canada are particularly likely to be homeowners.
- 11% of South Asian residents live in a household in core housing need, meaning that housing is unaffordable, in poor repair, or not large enough to accommodate residents according to national occupancy standards. This compares to 15% of the overall population of Vancouver.

South Asian residents are more likely to be in the labour force than people in the overall population, and a little bit less likely to be unemployed. South Asian residents are more likely to be working in primary, blue-collar or service industries, and less likely to be working in creative, technical or financial sectors. Among people age 25 to 64, 62% of South Asian residents have a post-secondary certificate, compared to 73% of the overall population.

Appendix C:

Historical Discrimination against People of South Asian Canadian Descent Advisory Committee

Applications to join the advisory committee were open during December 2021, to all members of the South Asian Canadian Diaspora communities and calls to apply were also shared in the Anti-Racism and Cultural Redress Newsletter sent out by the anti-racism and cultural redress team. Furthermore, staff connected with a diverse intersection of the South Asian Canadian communities to find members who were interested and passionate about anti-racism and cultural redress work for these communities.

Each member that joined this committee chose to carry the weight this work on behalf of their own families and South Asian Canadian communities, as well as the weight of intergenerational trauma, balancing competing demands for their time and the many other pressures that come along with being members of the targeted and marginalised community that is seeking redress. Staff would like to thank them for giving their time, guidance and knowledge throughout this process thus far.

Additionally, staff and the advisory committee recognize that this committee is missing representation from important sub-groups of South Asian Canadian communities and is looking to extend invitations to those groups as this work continues past the interim report.

Advisory Committee Members:

Dr. Satwinder Bains
Gulzar Nanda
Dave Mann
Manjot Bains
Rizwaan Abbas
Wally Oppal
Baltej Singh Dhillon
Joven Narwal
Humna Khan
Prem Gill
Aneesha Grewal
Harman Bains
Alex Sangha
Jag Nagra
Paneet Singh

Other Advisors:

Pall Beesla
Neelam Sahota
Jagmeet Sekhon
Preet Kang
Gian Singh Biring
South Neighbourhood House South Asian
Women's Program
Komagata Maru Descendants Society
Punjabi Market Collective