

APRIL 2023 / ISSUE 20

# INTERFAITH

## insider



### Sikh Heritage Month

by Reetsharan Singh



Sikh heritage has a rich history in Canada, dating back over a century. The first Sikh immigrants arrived in Canada in the late 1800s, primarily from the Punjab region of India, seeking better economic opportunities and escaping political instability and persecution.

Sikhs faced significant discrimination and racism in Canada, including being denied entry into the country and facing restrictions on immigration and citizenship. Despite these obstacles, Sikh Canadians persevered and

established themselves in various industries, such as farming, logging, and mining.

One of the most significant events in Sikh Canadian history took place in 1914 with a charter ship called the SS Komagata Maru. a chartered ship featured in a dramatic challenge to Canada's former racist practice of excluding immigrants from British ruled India. It proved to be an inhumane experience for the 379 passengers, first in an unsuccessful and eventually physical 2 month confrontation with officials, police and the military at the Port of Vancouver, and then in a final deadly encounter with police and troops near Kolkata on their return to India.

Today, Canada is home to one of the largest Sikh populations outside of India, with about 770,000 Sikh Canadians living across the country as of 2021. Sikh Canadians have established vibrant communities with gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) and cultural centers, promoting Sikh heritage and values, such as equality, justice, and compassion. Over the years, Sikh Canadians have made significant contributions to Canadian society, including in politics, sports, arts, and business. Sikh festivals, such as Vaisakhi, are celebrated across Canada, and the cuisine, music, and fashion seems to be well accepted by the people of Canada.

In recent years, Sikh Canadians have also faced challenges, such as hate crimes and discrimination, but they continue to stand strong and united in promoting diversity, inclusion, and social justice in Canada.

### Interfaith Interface

April 7

"CLOSED For GOOD FRIDAY"

April 14

"Vaisakhi and Justice"

April 21

"Yom HaShoah"

Holocaust Remembrance day

A safe, inclusive and inspiring activity where students come together to engage in thought-provoking dialogue. Fridays 1:30pm in MB305, Stan Grad.

[sait.ca/interfaith](http://sait.ca/interfaith)



# Yom HaShoah

by Jinky Potencioso

Yom HaShoah is observed on the 27th of the Hebrew month of Nisan. This year, it falls on the 17th of April. Internationally, this day is also known as the Holocaust Remembrance Day, a commemoration of the death of 6 million Jews murdered during World War II. I believed that the Holocaust was the greatest manifestation of antisemitism or the prejudice against the Jews, that mankind has ever seen in recent history. Yom HaShoah reminds us of the horrors that Jews and other persecuted groups who suffered.

Most Jews, commemorate Yom HasShoah by lighting yellow candles in memory of those who lost their lives. As I listened to the survivors' story, there is no doubt that they still feel the hatred, fear, and pain of losing family members, friends, and the agony of surviving the traumatic experience. One of the concerns revealed by Jews around the world is the deep fear that in quest to rewrite history, that the actual story of the Jewish Holocaust will be forgotten with less and fewer surviving family members alive to share their stories.

Let us spend a few moments to explore and access online readings about Yom HaShoah and websites of Holocaust Memorial Museums this month and discover the importance to keep the story of the Holocaust alive.



# Ukrainian Easter Celebration

Tuesday, April 11 | 11:30 am - 1 pm | Stan Grad Centre

Learn about Ukrainian Easter traditions and listen to the St. Stephen Protomartyr Ukrainian Catholic Church choir perform at noon.

## Qingming Festival

by Art Kung

Growing up as a Canadian child of Chinese immigrants, I always found it difficult to balance the two cultures. And though there are many annual festivals in China, I only recall 2 major ones that my family participated in faithfully. First was Lunar New Year and secondly was the Qingming (Tomb Sweeping) Festival. In my mother's dialect, it is referred to as Bai San, which is on April 5 this year.

This ritual was always very intriguing to me. In order to properly visit Grandfather's grave, we would bring large plates of roast pig, roast duck, BBQ Pork, a bottle of whiskey, 3 tea cups, 3 pairs of chopsticks, sticks of incense and loads of "death money" to burn at the altar.

Mom would pray at Grandfather's graveside with incense in hand, bow 3 times and then divide the incense into 3 portions to set 3 "table settings" in front of the headstone. The children then all follow suit to pay homage to Grandfather and our ancestors. Then mom would proceed to the altar to offer the "death money" to our ancestors.

Ancestral piety is likely the only true Chinese value that has endured through all the dynasties, imported religions, communism and emigration. Why is that? Honouring our ancestors and remembering them is our highest value and priority as Chinese people. Greater than my individuality, is to honour their name and memory. I guess that is why the Bai San is so dear to my heart. Not because I worship the ancestors, but because I want my life to give worth to their hardships, sacrifices and desires for me.