

IN MEMORY AND REMEMBRANCE OF THE KOMAGATA MARU

In March 1914 an Indian chartered ship named the Komagata Maru arrived in Canada. The charterer of the ship was a Sikh man by the name of Baba Gurdit Singh. On board were 376 passengers including 340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims, and 12 Hindus who were mostly from the Punjab region of India. Although they all had different lives, they came to Canada in search of a common goal: to live a better life.

Six years previously, the Canadian government had passed the Continuous Journey Regulation which is represented on the shaft of the anchor. At the time, in order to come to Canada, there had to be “continuous journey from the country of which they were natives or citizens”. This prohibited anyone from South Asia to come to Canada. The influence of this law shows the “keep Canada white” belief of that time. Baba Gurdit Singh wanted not only to bring Indians to Canada, but to challenge the untruthful beliefs towards South Asians in Canada. After two months on a crowded ship, the Komagata Maru had reached Coal Harbour. Setting the scene for a conflagration over immigration.



**TODAY, WE REMEMBER THE
KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT NOT FOR
WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE IT, BUT FOR
THE EVENTS THAT OCCURRED AFTER IT.**

When the ship reached the harbour, the passengers were met with orders from the Port Authority to immediately leave the the coast and go back to India. This was not possible for the passengers due to not enough food on board. The ship protested this unjustifiable measure for two months. Residing just offshore of where you are standing, members of the Khalsa Diwan Society raised hard earned money to keep the passengers alive on the ship, but after the BC government ordered a naval ship to escort the ship back to sea, the choice to leave had to be made.

WHY HAVE THIS MEMORIAL?

This memorial is a reminder and a memory of the importance of the Komagata Maru incident and its influence on South Asian rights in BC. Understanding our past and why events like these happen will help understand today, and why certain beliefs or ideals exist in our modern society. With this story, we can understand that other cultures had just as much of an impact on Canadian history as white settlers and that the commonly held belief of a “white Canada” was caused only by fear. With this event we can memorialize the 376 passengers aboard the the ship and how even though they never made it ashore, their stories and individual sacrifices have reached the souls of Canadians from sea to sea.

THE APOLOGY

FOR OUR INDIFFERENCE TO YOUR PLIGHT.

FOR OUR FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE ALL THAT YOU HAD TO OFFER.

FOR THE LAWS THAT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST YOU, SO

SENSELESSLY.

AND FOR NOT FORMALLY APOLOGIZING SOONER.

FOR ALL THESE THINGS, WE ARE TRULY SORRY.

- JUSTIN TRUDEAU, PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

TO SEE WHAT EACH ASPECT OF THE
MEMORIAL SYMBOLIZES, SCAN THIS
QR CODE:

