

POPPY 100 EVENT BACKGROUND

Remembrance Day exhibit commemorates the Punjabi-Canadian connection to 100 years of the poppy

Flanders Fields remembrance exhibition highlights the presence and the contribution of Punjabi troops and their connections to South Asian Canadians.

The events in Flanders have over decades has been narrated through a Eurocentric lens which has served to exclude the soldiers of serving on the Western Front. Tfirst and arguably most important battle in WW1.

DATE: Wednesday, November 10th, 2021

TIME: 11 am – 12:30 pm

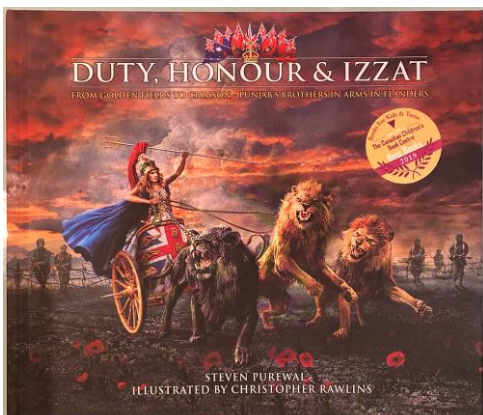
LOCATION: Museum of Surrey, 17710 56a Ave, Surrey, BC V3S 5H8

About Indus Media Foundation

Indus Media Foundation (www.IMFC.org) is a non-profit, secular Punjabi-Canadian heritage society that provides balanced perspectives of Punjabi heritage to Indo-Canadian youth and the education & heritage sector through a series of integrated event streams, educational products and Social Media assets. Our collaborations across an array of academic, heritage and community partnerships have helped us deliver youth-centric multimedia resources and public exhibits that have been featured in over sixty municipal, provincial and national events across Canada, including the Canada War Museum in Ottawa as part of WW1 Centennial commemorations (a complete event list can be found at www.imfc.org/events). Indus Media Foundation's educational products enable B.C. schools and universities to broaden their domain of knowledge around the shared colonial heritage of the First World War. A teacher's resource kit based on this exhibition is currently under development. The teaching resources produced in collaboration with Surrey School District 36 will cater to the learning objectives of the new B.C. educational curriculum. A short WW2 heritage film is currently in production for outreach beyond the classroom.

About Duty, Hounour & Izzat

Indus Media Foundation's award-winning book 'From Golden Fields to Crimson - Punjab's Brothers-in-Arms in Flanders', which offers an inclusive history of the events around the writing of the poem in Flanders Fields in WW1. The publication has been evaluated and approved as a teaching resource in the province of British Columbia. The book was also selected as a Kids and Teens best Book of 2019 by the Canadian Children's Book Centre, a national non-profit comprising committees of educators, booksellers, school and public librarians from across Canada. Duty Honour & Izzat was launched in April 2019 by the Honourable Harjit Sajjan, Minister of National Defence, on the occasion of the first national Sikh Heritage Month as enacted by Bill C-376 to enshrine the story of Sikh-Canadians into Canadian history.



"The project is a valuable educational contribution to Canadian Heritage as such the project holds great promise in helping to bring together Canada's diverse society in a mutual celebration of Canadian values."

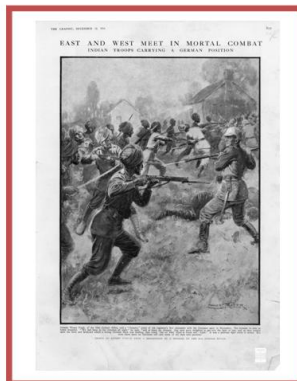
Office of the Lieutenant Governor of BC.

The poppy was adopted as a symbol of Remembrance in Canada in 1921 following World War 1 (WW1) and events in the 2nd Battle of Ypres 1915, during which Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) penned 'In Flanders Fields'. As we know, the poem, with its message of respect for the fallen, has linked the poppy with enduring acts of Remembrance across the world. However, like many traditional WWI stories, the events in Flanders have over the years been narrated through a Eurocentric lens which has served to exclude the soldiers of serving on the Western Front. This Centennial event recognises the Punjabi troops that fought to defend the Canadian line at Ypres - Canada's first and arguably most important battle in WWI.

Having reinforced the British Expeditionary Force at Ypres in October 1914, troops from the Punjab's Lahore Division (British Indian Army) were once again deployed to Ypres six months later when Germany resorted to chemical weapons to shatter Canadian defences. Standing stoically alongside Canadians amidst the carnage wrought by poison gasses, the Punjabis helped write a pivotal chapter in this country's nation-building saga. Second Ypres could well be considered Canada's greatest battle as it 'created' the Canadian Army; it set the tenor, the style and the esprit de corps that forged a fearsome reputation for Canadian troops that would carry them through the subsequent campaigns of WWI to the iconic Battle of Vimy Ridge. Many of these battles would feature Punjabi troops fighting alongside Canadians, including Festubert 1915, Somme 1916, Vimy, Cambria and Passchendaele 1917. Ultimately, more than 74,000 South Asians were killed in WWI. Casualties on the Western Front are buried or commemorated alongside Canadians in 115 cemeteries in France and Belgium.

Given their longstanding roots in Canada, the Punjab/Sikh community has suffered tremendous ignominies under Canada's White Canada policy. Misinformation was devised by Canadian lawmakers and designed to undermine their rights as equal British subjects. Punjabi soldiers fought alongside Canadian troops as fellow British Citizens (Canadian citizenship was enacted in 1947) under one flag and a common Crown. This contribution to Canadian battles has gone overlooked in classrooms, media and in Remembrance. Ultimately, nearly 500,000 Punjabis fought in WWI as soldiers of the King, the majority of which hailed from the very districts of those Punjabi passengers aboard the Komagata Maru, which was ejected from Canadian waters in the summer of 1914 - 2 weeks before the declaration of WWI.

Canada's official multiculturalism policy marks its 50th anniversary this year. Media are invited to attend a unique WWI Remembrance exhibition to address omissions in Remembrance and help tell the tale of diverse communities coming together to make the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms and democracy we all enjoy today in Canada.



Event Spokesperson: Steve Purewal, Historian

Indus Media Foundation

C: 778-840-4740

E: Steven.Purewal@imfc.org



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