

April 4, 2017

## April is Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario!

This month, we think of our Sikh co-workers and community members, and we remember the struggle of Sikhs in this land as part of the fight to rid Canada of racism and colonialism.

Sikh members are integral to the strength and perspective of our union, and Sikh workers have built much of the prosperity around us. But they had to fight the effects of racism and colonialism to do so, and the effects linger today.

The first significant wave of migration from the Punjab to Canada began around 1904, and most of the workers who migrated ended up in fishing, forestry, and railway work. So began decades of struggle. Sikhs created community associations to uphold Sikh tradition and to unite to fight for the right to vote, among other gains over the years.

The fate of the Komagata Maru, a ship carrying hundreds of migrants – mostly Sikh – that Canada turned away from the port of Vancouver in 1914, is an example of the setbacks and obstacles that confronted Sikhs and others. Nineteen of the passengers were killed by police on the return journey. Canada Post commemorated the tragedy with a stamp in 2014.

Sikh Heritage Month is intended to celebrate Sikh heritage with arts and cultural programming to educate and challenge us all, Sikh and non-Sikh – about acceptance, respect and inclusion.

We encourage members to find local arts and cultural events designed to educate the rest of the population and celebrate Sikh heritage. Learn about the contributions of Sikhs in our communities who, like so many others, came to Canada as immigrants and often as refugees, facing tremendous obstacles to reach acceptance and prominence as neighbours and co-workers.

In solidarity,



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