



Office of the Mayor  
**CITY OF VANCOUVER**  
 BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Proclamation**

**"KOMAGATA MARU DAY OF REMEMBRANCE"**

**WHEREAS** 2023 marks the 109<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Komagata Maru incident, an unjust part of Canadian history where a ship carrying 376 British subjects from Punjab, including 340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims and 12 Hindus arrived in Vancouver's Burrard Inlet on May 23, 1914, seeking entry into Canada with hopes of a brighter future;

**AND WHEREAS** The passengers, despite having valid travel documents and complying with a discriminatory \$200 head tax, were forced to remain on-board in poor and unsanitary conditions for two arduous months often going 3-4 days without adequate food and water. Their pleas for help, went unanswered by authorities, including the City of Vancouver's Mayor and Council. There are accounts that Indigenous people attempted to provide aid to the passengers in the form of food and water but were unsuccessful as the Government restricted access to the ship;

**AND WHEREAS** During this period, the passengers, with the help of the local South Asian community, fought a legal battle against their unjust treatment, led by Gurdit Singh and their lawyer, Joseph Edward Bird. The local South Asian community also organized protests and raised funds to support the passengers;

**AND WHEREAS** On June 29, 1914, Vancouver City Council expressly supported these racist and discriminatory laws by passing a resolution saying it was "unalterably opposed to the admittance of Hindus and other Asiatic races into this country..." and that "... these people would prove a serious menace to our civilization, both economically and socially ...", and sent a telegram to the Premier of British Columbia conveying this expression from Council;

**AND WHEREAS** Despite the resistance and legal efforts, the British Columbia Court of Appeal ruled against the passengers, resulting in their forced return to India. On July 23, 1914, the Komagata Maru was forced to sail back to India where those on board were labelled as political disruptors and 19 passengers were shot and killed by British Indian troops, numerous were injured, and many were jailed for years;

**AND WHEREAS** Many descendants of these passengers later immigrated to Canada settling in Vancouver and continued to fight against discriminatory laws including the right to work in a profession of their choosing, hold public office and the right to vote in 1947;

**AND WHEREAS** On May 23, 2021, Vancouver City Council officially apologized to the victims, their descendants and all those impacted for Vancouver City Council's June 29, 1914 resolution and the cruel effects it had on the individuals and the families affected;

**AND WHEREAS** The City of Vancouver is dedicated to addressing existing inequities including racial discrimination in all its forms and is committed to the ongoing redress work with South Asian communities to address historical discrimination against people of South Asian descent in Vancouver.

**NOW, THEREFORE,** I, Ken Sim, Mayor of the City of Vancouver, on behalf of Vancouver City Council PROCLAIM May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, as

**"KOMAGATA MARU DAY OF REMEMBRANCE"**

in the City of Vancouver.

Ken Sim  
 MAYOR

