

YEAR 6 HISTORY: Learning sequence 3

Sikh and Indian Australians

**MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA
1973 TO THE PRESENT**

HTAWA
History Teachers' Association of Western Australia



YEAR 5 HISTORY: SIKH AND INDIAN AUSTRALIANS

Learning sequence 3: Multicultural Australia 1973 to the present

1. Changing migration policies

1.1 According to Prime Minister Gough Whitlam (December 1972 to November 1975) Australia had “wiped its face clean of racism” following the Australian Citizenship Act of 1973. The Act put an end to any remains of the White Australia policy. Although, the Act of parliament did not change attitudes towards race so easily. Three features of Whitlam’s new immigration policy included that:

- migrants from any country in the world, would be eligible for citizenship after living in Australia for three years,
- race was to not to be a factor in the selection of immigrants,
- Australia would sign all global agreements relating to race and immigration.

The policy of multiculturalism came into being when Whitlam’s Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, stated that Australia was to be a nation enriched by many cultures. He called for people from across the globe to become the “family of the nation”. The policy of multiculturalism proposed that, within the bounds of Australian democracy and laws, migrants could choose to practise their customs and cultural traditions, and these practices will be accepted and celebrated in Australian society.

The Government developed new criteria for the selection of immigrants. These included a test based on qualifications and family reunion. These were formalised in the Numerical Assessment System (NUMAS) adopted by the Australian Government in 1979. Potential immigrants were viewed under three categories: family reunion, occupation and business skills and humanitarian (refugee status). Independent migrants had to gain a score of 30 points based on economic, personal and settlement factors such as age, work skills, ability to speak English and sponsorship. The new requirements meant that during the 1980s migrants from Asia increased rapidly. Acceptance of refugees from Indochina, especially Vietnam, increased this Asian intake.

See the significance of the Vietnamese refugees in the following 4 minute video clip:

Change from White Australia to Multicultural Australia

<http://www.abc.net.au/archives/8odays/stories/2012/01/19/3415230.htm>

The following resources are also useful in the study of Indochinese refugees:

Ahn Do The Happiest Refugee

National Treasures Cuc Lam’s suitcase. (video clip)

Refugees and migrants came from across the globe to live in Australia, so from the late 1970s waves of migrants to Australia reflected some important political and economic international crises.

1.2 Activity: Using the timeline created at the start of the resource (See [Teacher resource: Introduction](#). Overview of Australian migration). Students could translate this information onto a world map to indicate the source of migration to Australia from 1973 to 2015.

1.3 Discuss with the students the range of problems facing new migrants and how the government supports their transition into Australian society. What facilities and services have been established for these migrants from many different ethnic backgrounds? Students could be asked to bring in hard copies of documents which demonstrate this support for a range of ethnic groups in Australia. (government pamphlets, telephone directory, evidence of TV or radio programmes)

AREA OF LIFE IN AUSTRALIA	SERVICE OR SUPPORT
News and information	SBS translation services, ethnic newspapers and radio programmes
Health and welfare services	Translation of documents
Education	Education support, language classes, volunteer tutors
Social support	Ethnic clubs, sports centres
Religion	Places of worship - how many different religions are there now in WA?



Panel from the Welcome Wall, Victoria Quay in Fremantle. M. Southee

2. Continuity and Change - the origin of migrants 1949 to 2000

Online data supplied by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is reliable and usually presented in a clear form. The statistics (on source or birthplace) of immigrants provided in [Teacher resource 1](#) enables students identify patterns of migration and use evidence to justify their conclusions.

2.1. [Teacher resource 1 Statistics Main Sources of Immigration](#) (data analysis with suggested answers)

3. The growth and contribution of the Sikh community in Australia

The Partition of India and Pakistan into Hindu and Muslim states in 1947 divided the Punjab, the homeland of the Sikhs. The disruption and horrendous violence experienced by Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims, during the years after Partition forced many to leave their homeland. Hundreds of thousands of Sikhs and other Indians emigrated to the United Kingdom, East Africa, Malaysia, Singapore and Fiji. During the 1970s and 1980s many Sikhs also migrated to Australia. They came through family reunion or because of their business and professional skills as doctors and teachers. Most arrivals settled in capital cities and mixed well with other ethnic groups. The experience of Mohinder Pal Singh provides an insight into the experience of one Sikh migrant to NSW. To support the traditions of migrants many ethnic services have been developed such as SBS Television and radio programmes, as well as language, dance and sports clubs across the country.

3.1 Activity: Mohinder Pal Singh's life in Australia

Mohinder Pal Singh lives NSW. He shared this information about his life in Australia in May 2012.

I have my full cupboard [of turbans]. All that colourful stuff is there because I can't go to a wedding wearing a black or plain turban... It's a cultural thing. Back in India, my wife was always wearing [traditional clothing] but one year down the track she is comfortable wearing Western clothes.

Immediately after September 11 [2001], the attacks on the World Trade Centre, I found people were reluctant to talk to me; [people thought every person who wore a turban was a Muslim]. Things definitely changed after that. Many people from my community felt like that.

My wife and I are vegetarian by choice. Back in India, we cooked dinner at home. We cooked all sorts of traditional Indian food: lentils, vegetables, sweet rice... [At first], we had to go to Auburn to buy Indian groceries. Then there was a very good shop in Kogarah, very close, but we didn't have a car and the stuff was very heavy. The guy was very nice. He was delivering to us at home, free of cost. But now things are very different, even in Hurstville where about 97% of the population is Asian community like Chinese, Malaysian, Koreans and [people from] Hong Kong. Not many [Sikhs] in the St George area [but] there are about three or four Indian shops. Anything that's available in India, we can get here now.

...When we came to Kogarah, there was mostly a Chinese community. Because India had two major wars with China I [didn't] want to live here. But I find they are the most easy type of community. They are not troublemakers. Their culture is quite similar to Indian culture. We talk loudly, they talk loudly. We cook at home, they cook at home. They are very family oriented, they look after their family, their kids, older people. It's a quite similar culture. They are very friendly. Some live in their own groups, yes, but if you get into their groups they're very open. I never had any problems. Both of my boys went to Hurstville Public School. They were the only Sikh students and the others were [mostly] Chinese. No problems at all.

I have been living in this area about 13 out of 14 years.... I'm a member of Hurstville Council committees and my wife is a Council childcare assistant. I feel part of the local community. My older son, who's 20 now, he's a Council library assistant. My younger son, who's 12 years, goes to Blakehurst High School nearby.

I'm also well connected with my community. We call our religious place *Gurdwara*, it means 'door to the God'. [The] *Gurdwara* in Revesby, near Bankstown, was the first [Sikh] religious place in Sydney. But we have many others now. I feel lucky to live where there are so many. Now, all over Australia, [there are many Sikhs].

<http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/moving/moving-stories/mp-singhs-migration-story/>

Also show the students the Splash video (4 minutes) "Sikhs in Contemporary Australia".

Discuss each source with the class. Direct them to draw an explosion chart on what they have learnt about the way of life of Sikhs in Australia from these two sources, then reflect and write out any questions they have about issues facing migrants to Australia such as these Sikh families.

According to statistics released by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection at the end of 2015, Australia received 189,097 immigrants during 2014-15. The highest number of these immigrants were born in India (34,874 people). See the bar graph that shows the country of origin for people in Australia's Immigration Program, 2014 -15, by typing the following into your search engine:

SBS news article 2015 India major source of immigrants Australia.

SBS radio now broadcasts in many of the 22 official languages spoken in India, including Hindi, Tamil, Punjabi, Urdu and Nepali. The fastest growing Indian language in Australia is Punjabi. See

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2015/07/11/languages-india-some-fastest-growing-australia-and-sbs-radio?cid=inbody:india-the-major-source-of-immigrants-to-australia>

4. The Sikh Community in Western Australia

The Punjabi speaking Sikh community is certainly growing rapidly in Australia. According to the 2011 census 72,000 Sikhs lived in Australia, an increase of 177% in 5 years. In Western Australia an active association, the Sikh Gurdwara Perth (Inc), was established in 1996 to provide religious, social and cultural support to the rapidly growing Sikh population. They bought a church building in Murray St Bayswater and converted it into a place of worship (a Gurdwara). Through fundraising within the Sikh community the first purpose-built Gurdwara was opened in Canning Vale in 2001. This was followed in 2015 by a second Gurdwara in Bennett Springs, in the northern suburbs of Perth. The thriving Sikh community invites people to visit the Gurdwaras on Sundays and share a meal (langar) with them. Visits to the Gurdwaras during the week can be organised through the Australian Sikh Heritage Association. Contact Tarunpreet Singh at tarun_preet2000@yahoo.com



Volunteers from the Sikh community preparing for the langar at the Canning Vale Gurdwara M. Southee

An exciting opportunity to share Sikh history will be launched during 2017 at Adenia Reserve in Ferndale. The Sikh Heritage Walk will cover the wide range of Sikh contributions to the development of Western Australia dating back to the 1880s. The location of the Reserve, close to the Canning River, is significant as it was the site of early Sikh cremations in WA. The Sikh community was able to pressure the government to enact a new State law to allow cremations to take place. Find out more about this law by typing the following into your search engine: Australian Sikh Heritage WA Sikh Cremation Site.

A visit to this park can be made independently or in conjunction with a visit to the Canning Vale Gurdwara by contacting Tarunpreet Singh.



Entry to Adenia Reserve, Ferndale. M. Southee

5. On reflection

In 1984 the Prime Minister Bob Hawke said the following about multiculturalism in Australia:

“There is nothing ...new...about the idea of a multicultural Australia. Australia has been developing towards a multicultural society for nearly 200 years as each succeeding wave of immigrants has added to the diversity of our cultural traditions. The process has accelerated markedly in recent times...The effect has been that we have now developed as one of the most truly global nations in the world.”

L. Foster and D. Stockley, *Australian Multiculturalism: A Documentary History and Critique*.
1988, Multilingual Matters. p.35.

Hawke’s comments are even more true for the early twenty first century with the great diversity of people across the states. The 2011 census revealed the following information:

2% of Australians come from Indigenous backgrounds;

43% of Australians have at least one parent who was born overseas;

30% of the population were born in another country;

Of the overseas born, the major countries of birth are England, New Zealand and China;

About 8.5% of Australians were born in non-English speaking countries;

Australians come from over 200 birthplaces.

<http://www.racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/population/index.html>

5.1. Activity. The following activity will enhance student source analysis skills:**Teacher resource 2: Multicultural Australia. Source Analysis**

5.2. The students will enjoy this engaging 9 minute film on multiculturalism entitled: So much beauty in the People of Darwin; featuring six cultures, six stories and a song.

Type the following into your search engine: Splash abc media, So much beauty in the people of Darwin.

5.3. Review Activity.

Teacher resource 3: Mix and Match review