

PANEL 1: MIGRATION

Gursimrat Bawa

Next up we have the, we'll kickoff with the first panel discussion on the, on migration. Something that we all directly or indirectly related to. This discussion we'll look at how migration patterns have changed over time and how more recent Sikhs from fast, from the fastest growing group in Australia as you just heard 500% growth just in New South Wales itself. In order to moderate this session, we have just Jaspreet Sidhu who has background in clinical care and is currently a coordinator for the clinical trials network at the Australia and New Zealand College of Anesthetists, did I say it right? It's just hard. Sorry. Jaspreet is also a member of the mentoring team the, at YSPN, Melbourne. May I please welcome Jaspreet on stage.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Do you mind if I just stand next to you? It's funny many people can't say anesthetists. In Australia we say anesthetists.

Gursimrat Bawa

Anesthetists.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Altogether now.

Gursimrat Bawa

You just learn at YSPN guys.

Jaspreet Sidhu

But the Americans are constantly saying anesthesiologists and unfortunately the Americans about to win. So we might be changing our names to anesthesiologist as well. Anyway, thank you very much. Good Morning Ladies and gentlemen. Just give me a second to get myself organized. Sorry. It's my absolute pleasure and privilege to introduce three phenomenal members of the first channel, our first panel this morning on migration and communities. As I introduce each of the speakers, I'll ask them to please make their way up to the stage if that's okay. So, sorry. Okay. So first I'd like to introduce Supriya. Professor Supriya Singh is a professor in sociology for communications at RMIT. Her research is centered on how communication and money shape each other with a focus on the sociology of money and banking, migration, remittance, and transnational family. She has extensively researched the migration patterns of people from the Indian sub-continent to Australia. She's also the author of three books titled Money Migration and Family India to Australia, the girls eight last and globalization and money, a global south perspective. Please make welcome Supriya. Thank you Supriya. Our next panel member is Manpreet Kaur Singh. Although Manpreet is best known as a multi award winning SBS broadcaster her work across all platforms of journalism, newspapers, radio, magazines, television and online have earned her widespread respect and recognition in Australia and beyond. She joined the SBS program many years ago. I actually remember it in 1993 and she has made a significant contribution in areas of social justice, cultural cohesion, and multiculturalism. Her work is not only

helping to preserve the history of Indian arrival into Australia, but is aiding more recent migrants build their identity as Australian Indians by showcasing their achievements, highlighting their issues and encouraging solutions to community issues. Please make welcome Manpreet Kaur Singh. And thirdly our speaker Mr Harjit Singh. Harjit is one of the founders of The Australian Sikh Heritage Association, the ASHA who actually have a boot outside too, so please go and see them. Which documents and shares history on the early contribution of Sikhs in Australia. ASHA the Australian Sikh Heritage Association recently completed a first of its kind Australian Sikh heritage trail that serves to mark an early Sikh cremation site within a public park and create a meeting place for diverse communities. Harjit is also one of the founders of Turbans and Trust, which has generated over ten thousand one on one on one conversations between strangers to build an understanding of respect and equality. Something as Sikhs we all hold very dear to our heart. Passionate about turbans and his faith. Harjit's goal is to make Australia the most Sikh aware country in the world and he has an amazing sense of humor. Please make welcome Harjit Singh. Okay so before we make a start, might just invite each of you to please share a little bit more about yourself and tell us a bit more about the incredibly significant work that you do and as you speak, I get you to address the actual audience if that's okay. I'm part of it now anyway. So if we may start with Supriya.

Supriya Singh

Okay. Thank you very much. Jaspreet I'm very honored to be invited to be part of this event. And I know you're looking at me, but I'm looking at you to see what the gathering is all about To place myself in context, I grew up in Delhi but I belong to a refugee family. My family originated in Rawalpindi and I think a lot of the roots of some of us are in, what is Pakistan now. I migrated to Malaysia and lived there for 19 years. I migrated there on marriage a very traditional reason. So I was born one the Indian brides that was imported into Malaysia. And in 1986, my youngest son and I, we moved to Australia. So I've been here 33 years. And when people in India asked me, where do you belong? I say Australia, when people in Australia asked me, where do you belong? I say India. And then when people in Delhi asked me, where do you belong? I say, I'm in Dharamsala. So a lot of us have these transnational and partial identities and that I'm very proud to own. So when we speak about migration, I placed myself in that cohort of professionals who migrated to Australia on permanent visas in the 1980s and as my multiple migrants, some of them from Singapore and Malaysia, others from the UK and a few from Indonesia. So I think we are experienced migrants and very proud of all of our points of heritage. Thank you.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Thank you very much Supriya. Manpreet I'll get you to share a little bit about yourself and I know that you've got some beautiful slides, so I'm going to press play.

Manpreet Kaur Singh

Let's see if it plays, but I'll quickly talk about myself. So I arrived in Australia as a young bride myself in 1991, it seems like a whole lifetime ago. And I joined SBS in 1993 so it's been 26 years of multicultural broadcasting and it's been a fabulous journey. Personally, what can I tell you? The journey at SBS has been absolutely fantastic. A lot of awards have come our way, which I've been very lucky I've been nominated as a Walkley finalist, which I wear as a badge of honor, but the UN media awards and the New York festivals, the world's best radio and all of that. I'm very fortunate, New South Wales Premier's awards, couple of them, Victoria awards. So all of that work is basically hinged on migration stories. And those are the stories we love to tell, before I tell you a little bit about those stories, I also do want

to tell you that I've evolved as an AFL commentator in my stint over here and I've been broadcasting some earful games in Punjabi and Hindi. So don't please ask me to call the game at the moment, but I have done that. I'm on the board of our watch media advisory group for promotion of ethical reporting of family violence in the community. There are little things here and there. I've been involved with the Immigration Museum trying to promote identity and what it means to the community. Now coming back to the work and if I can get you to skip a couple of slides, I just want you to look at the history of Indian arrival and that has been one of my passions for a very long time. So the Indian arrival obviously to Australia is not a new phenomenon. We've been coming here since the 19th century for a long and it's the stories of the hawkers and sometimes I think how did they do it? You know these days we've got the modern technology, we've got telephone, Whatsapp. You've got so many ways of communicating, these people came here with little or no language skills and they made themselves apart in the fabric of the local communities. So these are some pictures of some Hawkers around Australia some various parts of Australia. I managed to jump up and just read if you can move to the next slide. I'll quickly tell you about these stories. I know that we are on a short leash of time, but I do want to tell you this story about Pooran Singh. So Pooran Singh was an Indian Hawker who came to Australia in 1899 he died in 1947 in a country town in Victoria called Warrnambool. And if you see that plaque I'm not sure if that's the, it's on the right, it says Pooran Singh died eight of June an Indian Hawker in western Victoria. So that was his identity here in Australia that he was an Indian Hawker who belonged to Warrnambool. Now, we found out in the year 2010 that even though Pooran Singh was cremated in 1947 by a family of Australian held a funeral parlor that is an Australian held family. They kept his ashes to fulfill his last wish that his ashes should be put in the river Ganges in the Holy River Ganges back in India. So after the commission in 1947 for 63 years, his ashes were kept by this Australian family the Guyot family in Victoria. So when I found out in 2010, I traveled up and sure enough the ashes were there. I don't have the time to tell you how this snowballed into such a big deal, but the cricket legend couple days actually came from India to pick up the ashes as a goodwill gesture. So the ashes have a completely different cricketer connotation for us at the moment. And we took those ashes back to India to immerse them in the Ganges, fulfilling his wishes sixty three years after. That's a picture of Pooran Singh. And what blew me away completely is the house that still exists in India. When we went to his village, now those of you who can read Punjabi, you'd be able to read the top of that on top of the plaque. It says, (? Saddar) Pooran Singh, and it says Australian. So that is his house in India. That house was built by his estate, the money that was transferred back from Australia to India, and it said his identity was Pooran Singh, Australian. And to me that's the quintessential Indian Sikh Punjabi story. And I've tried to make it my business to get as many of these stories as possible. So the family you see is the current family of Pooran Singh over there, there in India and on the left is a picture of Pooran Singh. Just see if I can quickly get you to get to the next slide. Do I have the time?

Jaspreet Sidhu

Probably a minute. This is fascinating.

Manpreet Kaur Singh

Okay. Talk to me about all of these stories. I mean this is just a sampling of what we do. This story, we actually put this out just day before yesterday. It's about the cremation of an Indian Hawker in another country town in Victoria with the previous slide, which we've quickly missed was from New South Wales. And I just wanted to show you that this man, Bud Singh, you have a couple of his pictures. He owned a big shop here in New South Wales. There's an area called [00:12:35 inaudible] and there's a

Camden hospital where Bud Singh was actually on the board. So I think he must be one of the wealthier early settlers and who contributed money to the Red Cross and all of that. So these are the fabulous stories and I really want all of us to own this heritage and to find out these stories and Harjit will tell you more about our military history here in Australia. So that's the other part of our work that I'm very proud of, but that's it. I think our identity is so important to us. I love telling these stories and I love for every new migrant to know these stories and be proud of it and say, yes, we are Australian as anybody else. So I guess that's where my work comes in and I love doing what I do. That's why I'm doing it for so many years.

Jaspreet Sidhu

And that's wonderful. Yes. And that's wonderful Manpreet then that's exactly why it is so important to have you here to share some of those untold stories. To share some of those untold stories as well. And certainly because of your experience and all of the research that you've been doing, delving into our history, it certainly shapes to project into the future as well. So we as the new generation, don't forget that. And we have an anchor to live by as well. Thank you so much. And that was a perfect segue too into Harjit's introduction as well into the military side of things as well.

Harjit Singh

Yeah, sure. Maybe I won't start with the military side because I'm probably not that versed. I'll probably start by saying, I'm really privileged and honored to be sitting across from some beautiful women. And I think I'm the exception when it comes to, I didn't come across as a bride. But my bridal story that I can share with you is since I got married three years ago this is the longest time I've actually spent away from my wife. It's ten days and I'm missing her terribly. So that's probably my bridal aspect. But when it comes to my background obviously I was born in New Zealand and I came across when I was four years old, went through school here in Australia and every part of that experience going through school, there was never a page that seemed to say or there was never a lesson that seemed to say Harjit you belong here. It was always, you're one of them we're us over here and thank you for coming across in the last 30 years. And it was only in high school when I was looking through these photos that the history teacher has putting in front of me, they looked exactly like the photos that you put up there Manpreet and essentially I looked at them and I said, well that looks like my granddad. But the history teacher said no, that was an Afghan that was a [00:15:27 inaudible] that's not your granddad. Your people came much later. It's only when we get a bit older and we start reading some of these wonderful articles that Manpreet she is writing and putting on Sikh Chick and SBS and I'll start saying, hold on, there's something here. Why wasn't this taught while I was growing up? It was already there. A lot of people knew it, but it wasn't as part of the curriculum. So a lot of the work that I did at that time was around coming from a place of being a victim. I looked at this problem and I said, you know what? I've been wronged. Somebody has done something they wrong me. And it took a couple of years of trying to educate people. When I started to realize that that was the wrong mindset, it wasn't to do with other people, it was to do with myself and what could I do to make a difference. And it turns out a little bit of effort and it can go a long way. So within a couple of years we've created an association that's shared millions, that's been shared millions of times. We've got schoolchildren, we got politicians in parliament who are now stating the exact words that we've been putting together over the last years. It's the facts. The three main facts around Sikhs in Australia that we've been here since the 1840s we're still here. Our Sikhs Anzac sports for Australians, 1.2 million Indians for the largest volunteer army of all time in World War One that goes unrecognized. And those things started coming out. And it was only

when that happened that I realized that it's really about empowerment and empowering yourself. Not by looking at it from a victim mentality, not blaming somebody else, but looking at yourself. And that enabled me to start something called Turbans and Trust. And like Jaspreet you went through earlier, that's allowed me personally to have 10,000 one-on-one conversations where I tied turban on some random person's head. But instead of teaching them about Sikh, I act as a Sikh which means to learn. And I ask something about that person and I asked to learn and be welcomed into their lives because with that, that creates relationships and I truly believe that's how we can make a better society. So that's my little introduction.

Jaspreet Sidhu

That's perfect. Thank you. Now, there will be an opportunity for some question and answer, but we might just start with a couple of questions for our panellists to share some more insights. So we might start with the certainly you've already shed some light on the history, but what is the heritage and history of Sikhs in this part of the world for you and for the community that is so important to tell? Whoever would like to start Supriya, please?

Supriya Singh

When I started studying the migration of Indians to Australia, part of it was to place myself in context. But it was wonderful to learn of the early history partly Manpreet that was there in the Blackburn Gurdwara when you came to speak. And also after when we were celebrating the federation's centenary to read about what was happening in Coffs harbor. And I'm sure John can tell you more about that. But I think the major migration came in three. They were three separate migration cohorts among the Sikhs and the Indians. The first started in the 1970s to the mid-1990s when professionals came over and these were usually married sort of with children, sometimes established professionally in India or in Malaysia, Singapore. And they came for a better future. It was usually male initiated migration and the women who were also professionals often slid in financial status because of the lack of family or paid health for childcare. So they came from metropolitan cities like Manpreet and I do, flow into English and they came as permanent resident. And I know from the stories that people said that within, you know, I mean, my experience was I already had a job in Australia when I came from Malaysia and it was in my field. Yeah. There was no business of driving taxis around. And even those people who had who took three or four weeks to get a job, they immediately had access to Medicare and to welfare. Now the second lot people like you Jaspreet who were born here, the Australian Indians, they grew up perhaps at times battling with the sense of identity as to where they belong. But most of them figured out very fast to say I'm Australian of Indian origin. And I think some of them had a pretty rough time in schools with racism and many that it was only when they went to universities and became professionals, like their parents that they found a broader South Asian identity and an Australian identity. But I want to also tell you of my discovery of what is the largest cohort of Sikhs and Indians in Australia and that is the international students and the skilled migrants who came from the middle of the 1990s there are very different lot and Manpreet I were saying that perhaps in India we would have found it hard to relate to each other. They come from Ludhiana Patiala Bathinda and some of the rural, urban villages. Many come from families where the parents are not English educated and they struggle with English and that is why some of them use their wives to do the IELTS exam and come as spouses. They come over here on temporary visas, but they come from a resurgent India where middle income families choose to invest in their children's education and future. They are very proud Indians and they come over here with an incredible sense of expert of enterprise. They are the first

group of Indians who have to pay to migrate. But they also the first group of Indians who have come in in an era or of new communication technologies. I was telling my daughter in law Arjith who is here that when I used to write to my mother from Malaysia and from Australia in the early eighties, I used to write on the air later forms. Now you won't know the air letter forms.

Jaspreet Sidhu

I do remember.

Supriya Singh

It used to take eight, ten days for it to reach India and then the answer would come. And so sometimes you didn't write of things that troubled you. And my mother did come to Malaysia, but it was once and it was an unusual visit. But most often the parents in India did not know your life. And often the older Indian migrants in Southeast Asia, they never had the opportunity to go back to India. And even the migrants who came to Australia in the 1980s like I did, usually they went to India once every five or six years. And the parents did not often come. Now when I speak to the young Indians, they talk to their parents every day and I say every day and they go once or two or three times a year and their parents come. So it's a reciprocal kind of communication that some of the early migrants never had with their families. And the money goes two ways. You know, before we sent money home we meaning it's usually the male, but in post partition India with gender norms changing in my family, the daughters also send money home. But remember it is the parents who have sent money to Australia to educate their children. It is middle income, discretionary income that is boosting the education industry in Australia. And the children also send money home. So great enterprise. But these four cohorts also meet that we have challenges to face. And when I look at the audience here, I don't see very many people from the Indian student cohort. They've grown up differently. They have different needs. They have different value systems, some of which I like very personally, even in the universities, some of the young Indian students who have become professors now, they come, they always address me as Supriya Ji and I think this is wonderful. Some of them even in the cafes will touch your feet because this happens more in Punjab than it happens in Delhi. So I'm savoring it. They come to our Gurdwaras more. Now, my son who came when he was 15 and is a professor now. I have to withhold, pressuring him to come to the Gurdwara and just read [00:25:29 inaudible] also come to the Gurdwara when there's a marriage or a function. But these young men and women, they are the ones that have been responsible for the growth of our Gurdwaras. And I take this inclusiveness is a very big challenge. We find it hard to talk to each other. But I think in not talking to each other, we are missing a great opportunity. I remember a young man who was twenty four years old came from Patiala. He worked three jobs. He already had bought land for his parents in case they ever wanted to come. And he went back home and I told my son, my God you and I think we've done very well, but look at that young man. And they have reached out to the community because they've been excluded. You look at our Gurdwaras and on Gurdwara councils, all men, usually no women, no young people. We are losing an opportunity, but the second thing I think that we need to do is I think like we've heard earlier, extend the notion of sewa. But the sewa has to go to a transnational communities and to the indigenous and the multicultural communities of Australia. We belong both places. And the third one I think is balancing the interests of the transnational families wherever they are and the nuclear families at home. And the fourth and I think Manpreet we share a common passion here. I think we have to change this patrilineal and patriarchal culture that all the cohorts of migrants from India have brought with them to a culture of respect and recognition that as a community we face a terrible global challenge of

family violence that unless we have a culture of respect, we as a community are not going to succeed and I think we are making, taking some steps towards that but the culture of respect and the culture of consultation rather than a culture of male control and entitlement and that's for some of us to encourage in our own children and in our own lives but we have to take, recognize that we are part of this very big global problem and we have to do something about it.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Thank you very much. Thank you Supriya. And that was most-most-most insightful. Manpreet and Harjit I invite you to comment or pose an opposing view if you may, if you do have.

Manpreet Kaur Singh

I'm in furious agreement with her. I'll just make a few comments. I guess when you look at the minister actually mentioned how exponentially the Sikh community has grown here in New South Wales, but as you heard currently in the latest census of 2016, 126,000 Sikhs live in Australia, out of that 51,000 live in Victoria, that's a big skew. That's 40% over, 40% of the Sikh population now resides in Victoria. Even when I look at the Punjabi population, because I do the Punjabi program is SBS, back in 20, 2006 when we had the census, I remember our numbers were 26,000 and I said, that's ridiculous. 26,000 Punjabi speakers all over Australia just sounded ridiculous to me. But then we grew in 2011, we were 72,000 and this time we are 132, 000. So we are a very large community point five percent of the population, the Sikh population is point five percent of the Australian population now. Challenges as Supriya Ji, real definite Ji. The challenges are many and of course family violence is the ugly face of the society. But then let's not single out the Indian Sikh Punjabi one community. The sad fact of the matter is that one in three Australian women do face family violence and that to me is the worst thing. Now I did this award winning documentary, which has probably won six or seven international awards called the enemy within. And ideally would ask you to hear it if you haven't heard it because you hear from not just victims but experts. And one thing that a police superintendent said to me will always stay with me. And I asked him the question about violence against women. Where is it perpetrated the most? And the sad fact of the matter is women are safer on the streets than they are at home. And what kind of indictment is that on our society? So this is a challenge we're facing globally and as a community, because we are a cohesive community, we rely on families so much. Mothers are, we say mother tongue. These are the basic things for us, mothers is so important. We really need to look out for our mothers and sisters and we have to educate and support our sons and our brothers and all of them, the males there. So yes, that is one of the things. But the other thing I found from the census last time that came around, 30% of the Punjabi speaking women have no jobs. That's a big concern for me. When we look at most of the males being employed and here, we talking about professional employment, which is fantastic and it's lovely to see young professionals like just Jaspreet and all the wonderful people I've met here today. But this is something to think about. Our girls are going to the best of the schools? Getting private education? Why aren't they in gainful employment? These that to me is a big thing as well. So when we talk about empowerment, it has to come from within the family home. Look, I don't expect a government legislate things like this. I think this comes from within every household. If our house has the right role models, we have a better household, we have a cohesive community, we have a cohesive society. And I really feel that the violence in the world would reduce if family violence did reduce. So that is one of the other challenges. I guess the initial thing you did say Jaspreet. What are the stories that must be told? And to me as a storyteller and a journalist, that is what really inspires me. So when we do mentioned about the Indian Anzacs and we keep looking at these amazing people who

came hundred and fifty years ago and somehow became a part of the Australian imperial force and they go along to European shores and they fight battles for Australia. What I would really like to do is have someone research into the families of those people. Why don't we know more about the families of the Indian Anzacs, I know Harjit has mentioned the books coming out and I did help, well I was involved with Peter Stanley in the previous book, Indians in Gallipoli so, that'll be fascinating to know more about the Sikhs in Gallipoli and the Indian, the Sikhs from Australia, but that would be great. And then the other stories, the unmarked graves of these Indian Hawkers, that dot the Australian countryside. Let's all make it our business whenever we go out for a drive or something just take a look around the local cemetery. Just look around, talk to the people, the locals. They have fabulous stories to tell. I showed you that picture of that 87 year old woman Zelma she is such a fantastic woman. She remembers clearly Pooran Singh and she talked oh, he had a smart suit he used to wear. This oral history is so important to retain. These people will not last very long. So to me, let's make this our business and find out more about our shared heritage because that gives us our added sense of identity.

Jaspreet Sidhu

That's wonderful. Thank you. Thank you Manpreet. Harjit, do you have anything to add?

Harjit Singh

I think, once again, if there is agreement with everything that's been said. I think we started touching on some of the challenges that are being faced. But only thing I'll add from a migration perspective I think is, we sometimes think that we are the first professionals to migrate to Australia or to develop in Australia. But if we go through history and yeah I think you just touched upon it there. There were Sikhs professionals, there were Sikhs businessmen who were trading with Australia just either before or just after the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire. So if you think that we didn't have a connection to one of the contemporaries Napoleon the great we, definitely have a very strong connection between Australia and Punjab. And I think when Manpreet Ji you covered a story later last year around the Punjab in Australia. I mean, come on guys we've got a five rivers state year. Like, you know the name, like it doesn't get more Aussie and Punjabi than that. You got an Aussie guy naming his leasehold Punjab and he's got all the rivers, et cetera in there so it's pretty cool. And I think so these professionals were doctors, you had doctors a hundred years ago coming out here, there were [00:35:37 inaudible]. They might not have been professionally trained by some English institute, but they were selling things off just on George Street in Sydney here, they had big bags they had really nice suits they are ex-military guys and were well respected. So they, it's all when it comes to conversing, I'm sure they, they spoke proper English as they called it back then or the queen's English and they were able to sell and do quite well for themselves. So don't forget that we've been professionals here for a very long time and I think that the thing that resonated with me Supriya Ji and I'll keep that going because I'll keep saying it till you blush maybe that's the plan. But I think the thing that really resonated with what you talked about there, there's a challenge there that you're saying this really might not have too many Indian students, but I think you'll find that are actually more than you think. The other thing is what really resonated is that you talked about being inclusive. We can't be exclusive and these days we're becoming more polarized. Every day, thanks to good old social media, we can unfollow people, we can stop listening to the other side. When in reality we must listen to the other side. If you're in government, you learn that every day because you get hammered by the opposition. But that makes you stronger. That makes our society stronger. To have that ideas tested and we are men and women

of the steel that is what we've been described as and therefore we can take the battering, we can take the heat that steel needs to, to form a blade. And so I think we can be inclusive. We can stand the test of time. And I think there's a very positive future for us in Australia.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Harjit I might just get you to also add, so we've heard of all the different cohorts of people who have come in and I agree with you that we aren't the first generation of Sikh professionals. Our parents are and ancestors who came here, were all professionals. And we heard that was the first group of migrants until we knew better of the hawkers of course. But what do you see as not just the challenges, because we have talked about that, but what do you see as the hope for the future of our community here based on the great strengths that we do have as a community? The skills and to be more inclusive.

Harjit Singh

Yeah, sure. And I think that's an excellent question because I'm very passionate about understanding myself because I think the Sikh path is not about talking about others, is it? I mean we should all know that it's all about ourselves and connecting to that spirit within. So Sikh starts with a number. It actually starts with a number, not a word. It starts with a number one it starts with [Speaking Punjabi]. And all I ask, I think is, and this is my greatest hope is that we start practicing that a little bit more. Otherwise all we are is a bunch of people that dress like something or affiliate with something member of a club, member of a gang, you could say sometimes the way we can act, but essentially it's a club that existed a few hundred years ago. We've still got admission. But in reality, if we don't start practicing that [Speaking Punjabi] if we don't start doing something with that Sikh aspect of our organizations, there's so many organizations let's all put a Sikh there, but what do we do to actually act on that? And I think there's some wonderful initiatives like Young Sikhs Professionals Network, Sikhs of Australia. All these guys who are trying to practice that [Speaking Punjabi] and for me, my personal view around that, my greatest hope is that Sikhs will once again in their own community start fighting for the most oppressed and most down trodden people within that community because that was our single purpose a few hundred years ago. And in my opinion that means bringing along our indigenous brothers and sisters in our local communities and I hope that our grandchildren well certainly my grandchildren because when I think about my grandparents, I think about World War Two. I think about 1947 the partition, the greatest mass migration of all time only surpassed recently was Syrian refugee crisis, I think about 1994 with my parents, right? They were resilient enough to get through that, they'd bounce back. You would never think that there was genocide committed any 50 years ago to those people. And I think we can pass that lesson on. I think we can bring along and empower others to come along with us on that journey. And that's my biggest hope.

Jaspreet Sidhu

That's great. Manpreet.

Manpreet Kaur Singh

It really hardens me when I look at the numbers and the statistics sick as it is now, the fifth largest religion of Australia officially. So when the census numbers came out, I know in 2006 when I looked at the census numbers, we weren't even in the top 20. So in, in a matter of 10 years, we've managed to become the fifth largest religion of the nation. But I think we have a long way to go in making the rest of the community, the wider community understand who who a Sikh is, what a sick stands for, what we

do, what our identity is. And I think what Harjit just mentioned, it's so important to get involved and not just in our own our own activities that we only doing six things for the Sikh people. I think it's so important to be involved in the wider community. So it really hardens me now that you know, the tragedy in towns will have taken place united Sikhs is there. Can't say it is there and it's the Australian chapter of United Sikhs that is there which is fantastic. So these things are the things that will build our identity for us. So let's not just do the few things where only we are invited. So things like the Sikh [00:42:07 inaudible] they are fantastic yes we have to support those institutions. Some of the people come from the wider community, but if you take up the cause say of the indigenous communities of any other injustice that happens and become a part and fabric of the community, like we've got Gurinder Sandhu playing cricket, we've got Sangha, Jason Sangha coming up playing cricket for who knows Australia very soon. I'd be very happy to see some names from our community being represented and the wider scheme of things. We probably want a `Singh in the parliament very soon. Let's hope that comes true. So I think we need to get more involved in the local activities. And to me the challenge would be with a new cohort of migration that you mentioned because of the connectivity with India. I feel they are far too involved with Indian politics and the Indian state of affairs over there and they're not getting as involved with things over here. That is something I would like for everyone to think of because when you look at these hawkers and these people from a hundred years ago, there was so much a part of the local community they got involved in the local things. So that is the one thing I feel that the current generation of migrants and I'm very hopeful they will do it. They will do it the way we are growing it's not a matter of if it's a matter of when that you see more Sikh names on the boards of corporates and in government and in other especially in sporting organizations. I would love to see that happen.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Fantastic. Thank you. Supriya, do you have anything to add?

Supriya Singh

Not much. I think I've said it before, but I think that broadening our scope of sava broadening the issues of gender equality that are central to our religion and I, but I also think that in this day and age, it is trans-nationalism that is the theme. And I think you can be important both in your source country and in your destination country because it is important there. And it is important here, but as a Sikh I also have other identities. I have an identity in my family is a refugee family. So when I hear about refugees, I see that we should make common cause and sometimes I'm bewildered by people's reluctance to do that in the community. And I think we need to be very grateful for the first people of this land. And we should do something very important and visible and show our affinities, but I fail to see that sometimes. And it's, and again, I think the issues of respect within the family. If we don't respect our own people, our elders, our women, our children, our men within our own families, we are not going to be able to do that for others. So, but I have great hope. I think some of the young people are very enterprising and I actually see some of the young Indians reaching out politically in ways that some of us didn't. We were very busy building up our own careers and some of these people are very engaged and I just want to feel that we can harness that engagement because of the continuities of culture and despite the differences of where we have grown up and how we have come. I think we have much to offer.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Fantastic. Supriya, do you think, sorry, if you don't mind. Do you think as a community although we have seen through the census that we are the fifth largest religion in Australia now do you think as a community, we there's potentially some growing pains for us as a migrant community as compared to Canada, the US the UK and on that line, what do you think we can learn from those communities and do better here to prevent some of the issues that are occurring internationally?

Supriya Singh

I've been most impressed by some of the diasporic communities, particularly in the US and the UK. And I've been impressed by like the United Sikhs. You see them visible. You see them visible if there's a problem in Haiti, you see them visible if there's a problem elsewhere in their own countries, you see the Indian Sikhs visible when the tsunami was there in south India. All right. So I think some of those issues, but they also think they have organized themselves to recognize and address some of the problems within their own communities. If you look at the issues of family violence, the diasporic communities have organized themselves to look their own in a culturally sensitive way. And I think that's very important when you are a minority community in another country because some of the issues of money, some of the issues of power, some of the definitions of what makes for empowerment in a woman are very different in our community. In our community I don't think a woman aims to be alone and independent and self-sufficient. She wants to be connected and part of the community and part of a family. And this is part of the global south, not just us. So we have to empower women in ways that they want to be empowered. And I think some of the diasporic NGOs are doing a fantastic job there. Not just by saying, okay it's enough to be Indian, it's enough to be Sikh. But recognizing the cultural distinctiveness within the context of the US or UK. And I think we all still have much to learn from that.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Fantastic. Do you have anything to add?

Manpreet Kaur Singh

Very quickly. I mean it's obvious we will have growing pains because we've grown very quickly the growth has come so quickly in five to seven years. It is obvious that we will settle down with finding our feet. Once the community finds its feet. I have no doubt we will be a lot settled. But what's to the core of it I feel is when you talk about Sikhism and the growth in the future language is essential for it. The Punjabi language and that is something that is a challenge as well for the kids growing up over here.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Yes it is.

Manpreet Kaur Singh

So although the Punjabi language, the first generation people speak beautifully. It's transference of that language to the second, third and fourth generation. And I feel any program that is trying to cater for the community, the growth of the Sikh community in the future has to consider how to keep the language intact. It's wonderful to see most Gurdwaras running Punjabi classes but, and the fact is that year 12. Well in Victoria kids who've been doing these, year 12 Punjabi for a while and you get bonus marks, you get hundred and five out of hundred and four for doing Punjabi which is fantastic. So it started in New South Wales, but teachers are telling us the numbers are dwindling. It's very low. I

believe it was only 12 in one of the school, the largest schools over here. So that is something that we must think of Punjabi [Speaking Punjabi].

Jaspreet Sidhu

Yeah. So true. Harjit, do you have anything to add?

Harjit Singh

Sure. I mean growing pain, sorry, for the recent wave of migration theming inside I can say it happened really quickly and it happened over the last ten years. Right. Cause that's what the stats say and it has happened in the last ten years. But I think that the real pain that I've seen is what Supriya Ji talked about earlier around exclusion of these groups and us. And then, and unfortunately you can't look across to any other country around the world, the UK, the US and Canada, and find a better model because they've done exactly the same thing and they've done it twenty years ago. So they've done the exact same thing like scooting those new migrants. And in my opinion, if our grandchildren are sitting next to each other, a grandchild of mine and a grandchild of a recent migrant, they are not going to see any difference in one another. Right? They're going to be exactly the same. But what they will judge us is by the stories their grandparents told them about how they treated each other. And I reckon that is going to be our judgment. How did we treat these people? How did we actually welcome them? And how did we integrate them into what we call and love Australia. So I think there is definitely a growth pain there and certainly a challenge that I appreciate ideas on how to address.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Fantastic look to open the floor up for any questions and answers if that's okay. We've got a couple of roving microphones. Just the Jasmine and [00:51:50 inaudible]. Any questions from the floor? Surely there's someone. [00:51:57 inaudible]

Male 1

Hi, thanks so much for that presentation. It was really insightful and great to hear things talked about in this way. I guess my question is around comparing Sikh migration to other countries. And you mentioned growing pains and finding your feet and all of these concepts. But if you look at the Sikh migration to Australia, how does that compare with a migration to other non-Indian countries like Canada or Singapore? Are we following the same trajectory? Have we diverged? Is there things we can do to speed up our transition?

Harjit Singh

Maybe I'll make some opening comments. I think you probably both got a, I think there's a myth out there that Sikhs went to Canada the UK and the US or even Kenya before they came to Australia. And that is an absolute myth, isn't it, John? It's an absolute myth. If you come out to the stall and that we've got running for [00:53:05 inaudible] characters, there's a new timeline that I've trialing out. I want to try that with you guys. Let me know what you think. So give me some feedback, but it starts with 1834. Now tell me where a Sikh went to the UK, Canada or the U S in 1934. You can have a read on it. I won't go into the details. So the reality is tough, but what happened was it wasn't permanent migration. It was transient migration. It was people coming out here doing some business, heading back, coming at here on the camels, heading back, doing the walking, heading back. And the key link that made it continuous was {?Ogaba) Kar Saba up in Cairns. And the key ingredient for that was women. The

people who are allowed to bring their women who were allowed to bring their children were able to keep that continuous heritage on. So that continued heritage is actually just as long as the American diaspora, just as long as the Kenyan diaspora, just as long as the UK Diaspora. But it's just not pervasive for some reason.

Manpreet Kaur Singh

Well, I heard something fantastic when I've been back to a village with Pooran Singh's ashes and we were talking to the locals there. So the old timers, remember the people used to come out Niji, Fiji and trailia, right. New Zealand, Fiji and Australia. So for times in memorial, people have been coming out this way. So migration pattern is not new, Harjit was spot on, I think it's, it's the size of Australia and because people have been living in such disparate far flung places except of course in Coffs harbor and that's why it's such a strong community there. They've been able to sustain that culture, the religion and all the aspects for generations together because it stayed together. But everywhere else in little country towns around New South Wales and Victoria, there were too few to survive as a community group and to make a larger impact. I have a feeling it's just a theory. I have a feeling that when they went to say UK or Canada or US they tended to congregate in small areas and that's how they made a bigger impact. So now is our chance. Now we are in huge numbers. So it's never too late to, you know, make that start. And I think we are no different, it's just the size of the continent is different and that's why we haven't heard it. On the other hand, as Harjit has done it is fantastic what they've done in business in Western Australia I believe this needs to be done in every Australian state. The history of Indian and Sikh arrival in Australia to be taught in the schools, in the curriculum that is going to do so much for our personal identities going forward to me. Kudos. Can we please clone you in all states?

Harjit Singh

Many clones are out here I think.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Fantastic. Supriya you have anything to add to the first questions?

Supriya Singh

Just that I think our consciousness of the diasporic populations comes with money. You know, India was not very narrow when Nehru was prime minister. He actually told all the Indian migrants to assimilate in their country of destination and forget about India. But as soon as the money started flowing from the Indian migrants, we had a ministry of External Affairs in India, very recipient migrants, 69 billion dollars to India, making it the largest recipient of international remittances. So, when we think of diasporas old and new, the fact is that the new one send money home very regularly and suddenly India becomes very conscious that we exist. Whereas these different histories of migration have been, they're all over. In the early days of the US migration of Sikhs and Indians to the US the women weren't allowed. And so the Sikhs married Mexican women in order to get land and in order to get your parties, I think the Tortilla. And so you had still in California Maria Singh, Sanchez Singh and we didn't, when the Indians from India came, they didn't recognize them as Indians, but I don't think we should recognize that we have issues, but we shouldn't feel too guilty about them. The Italians and the Greeks in Australia have the same problems upside down though. People came from the villages first from Greece and Italy and now professionals are coming and they don't get along either. You know, they don't want to recognize that they are Greeks and Italians. But as I said, I think we have greater strength

in unity. And sometimes the stories I heard from the new migrants of their lack of welcome in Gurdwaras made me feel very ashamed and we tried to do something about it to put in formal institutions of welcome. And I think we must that in Sikhism there is one very big lack. We lack the pastoral element. And it happened to me when I first came to Australia. I was divorced and I had a son and I went to the Gurdwara and I was dressed in Punjabi clothes and nobody would speak to me. And I kept trying to smile and nobody and I kept trying to make. And then one woman who was very nosy in the middle of Kierstan said, who is your father in law? I said, no, no, I'm divorced. And he said, who's your father? I said he left India a long time ago when she finally got it out that my father in law in Malaysia was a JP in Penang and if I've told this to Harjit recently she went to her husband and she said [Speaking Punjabi]. Now, If you understand that I am JP the Justice of Peaces, eldest daughter in law because we don't have a word in Punjabi for ex daughter in law. And they all said, and they all said [Speaking Punjabi] and I'd been there for two years and later on when I got involved in the community. The Sikh welfare organization, some people came and apologize to me [Speaking Punjabi] Australia no. So, because as a religion, our religion is based on family and community. And if you don't have a family over here, you don't have a Sikh identity. If nobody knows which village you come from in Australia, they don't talk to you. And we have to welcome people who are strangers to our Gurdwara. And I don't really know exactly how we do that except personally to say hello to somebody whom you don't know in the Gurdwara and this is our own. And you know, people talked of it with tears in their eyes and I couldn't but feel ashamed that I had been part of that cohort that perhaps did not welcome them enough.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Supriya, thank you for sharing that. I think we'll all make a concerted effort in the future too because it's always when you know something doesn't always come into your mind until you've had shared experience with that. So thank you for sharing that. And I'm sure that was a very personal story to share and I'm sure the audience will be grateful for that. There's a question up the back if, just in, thanks.

Male 2

Might be just enough time. Hi, my name's Sandeep. Thank you so much for your time and energy. It's been it's been great listening to you for the last hour. Just building on the point that we just finished off now about the importance of including new migrants that will be the legacy that we're judged on in ten, twenty, thirty years' time. Is there an ethnic community in Australia that you could point to say they did well? Is there another community in Australia that does these things either locally or more broadly that we can learn from?

Manpreet Kaur Singh

Good question. No, I think everybody's ravished with the same problems. But the thing is I, if you indulge me, like if we had a very lovely experience and I must share we were recent migrants. So in 1994 we were at the Gurdwara in Blackburn B [Speaking Punjabi] we were at the Gurdwara outside and there were these two young students with literally just arrived. Four or five days ago, they'd left home for the first time ever. And I saw them with tears in the corner of the eyes. These are young men in their early twenties and I just got talking to them and we say to them so it seems like you must be missing home, so why don't you come home with us? So just happened we took them home, we made lunch and we really like the young men. We did not know them from a [00:03:31 inaudible]. And one thing led to the other, that lunch became a weekend together, became a week together within four weeks, five

weeks they started staying with us in our house. We really got on very well for us, for me, felt like I found my family because I didn't have my family. So I had these two brothers that I had at home and they actually lived with us six years. And to me that has been the most rewarding relationship I've had. Those relationships continue and in fact it was one point that two more boys came and stayed in a house and here I'm hit making (?bronte) with these four young lads every weekend. I'm going guys I can't do this anymore, but all I wanted to say is if we do it, we weren't able to do it again obviously. And we only did it once ever, but those are four people that did stay in our house and have left lasting memories for us. I hope in some way we contributed. I think it doesn't take much to do that.

Harjit Singh

Yeah certainly I think that is a great question and I'll probably agree with Manpreet. I'm not sure if there's one community that does it absolutely fantastic. But I think you can look at other communities and see this some spots of ideas and I think there are some sparks of ideas out there that seem to work. Like if you look at the bar high community, I'm not sure if you know, but like they, they love organizing things so that's like part of their religion is organization. So you don't actually got a number that you can call in any country in the world that will hook you up with the nearest bar high. All right. Pretty cool system. All right. I'm not sure we can do that, but it's something that's interesting. It's an interesting concept that you can go any country in the world doesn't matter. You get off the plane, you call someone and they'll hook you up with the nearest bar high. Huh. Other things that you can see if you look at other countries, the Scandinavian countries, I've forgotten which country it is, but I was reading an article about it around, it's a state sponsored mentoring program. So they want to welcome refugees. They want to welcome migrants. But the thing is they know that if they don't mentor people, which is what we suck at in Australia, we've got PhD qualified people driving taxis, driving buses, driving trains. All right. We've got people with Masters of engineering. They're not doing engineering, all right. But what they do in these Scandinavian countries is as soon as you arrive to actually make sure that for a year you get paid up with a Scandinavian person who's in the same profession as you. Interesting idea. Once again, not sure if we can implement it, but it certainly is spark that that I think has merit. And I think, certainly commend YSPN for their mentoring program for doctors. And I think if that could be rolled out across the board we will see much faster integration, which faster progress in our society or our community to catch up to the rest of the world.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Fantastic. Do you have anything to add?

Supriya Singh

No. Thank you. Thank you.

Jaspreet Sidhu

Unfortunately, I think we're going to have to, no, just one more. Okay. SiMran. Thanks.

Female 1

Hello everyone. I just wanted to, I guess get your comment about the different Punjabi communities within ourselves. You talk about unity, but I've noticed a lot that in our Sikh community alone there's, the Malaysian Punjabis, and then there's the Indian Punjabi they come and tend to see the Malaysian

Punjabi, like this. So I find that unity is a problem we see among ourselves. And what's your comment on that? Do you find that? Cause I do definitely. So I just wanted to see what you thought.

Supriya Singh

I've been in a very privileged position because when I went to the Blackburn Gurdwara that was founded by a Singaporean migrant, Indian Migrant. I can become Malaysian and Indian, whichever way the food is going. But I mean it is sad that you don't know the strengths of each and Malaysian Punjabi sometimes doesn't see herself or himself as Indian. And I think deep down if you go into your roots, where else do you belong and you only be strengthened by that association. And I think if they're Indian, if somebody has from Indian and don't, doesn't recognize the Malaysian Punjabi or the Singaporean Punjabis he or she loses a whole wealth of migration experience because as Manpreet said, they are the experienced migrants. As soon as they came they were able to settle in and contribute. So we have to recognize that contribution. And yes you are from a village, you are from Ludhiana rather than from Delhi. What the heck, what difference does it make? And, our children are not going to be it-

Harjit Singh

Different clothes, different styles.

Supriya Singh

So just talk to each other for heaven's sake. The food is good on both sides.

Harjit Singh

I had to make comic because Supriya was stealing all my jokes.

Jaspreet Sidhu

And I think that's a really good way to say that the food is good on both sides. It is time for morning tea. So to that end, I'm going to have to call this session to a close. Thank you very much to our panel members.