



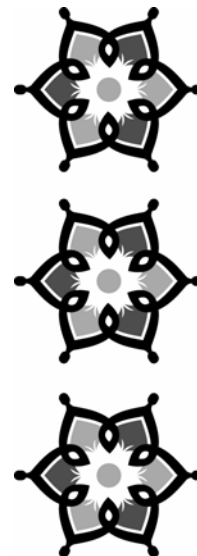
**CENTRE FOR INDO-CANADIAN STUDIES**  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE of the FRASER VALLEY

CONSULTATION REPORT  
ABBOTSFORD YOUTH FORUM  
MARCH 10, 2007

PRESENTED BY

THE SPEAK OUT GROUP  
&  
CENTRE FOR INDO-CANADIAN STUDIES  
AT UCFV





# Consultation Report

*Abbotsford Youth Program*  
*March 10, 2007*

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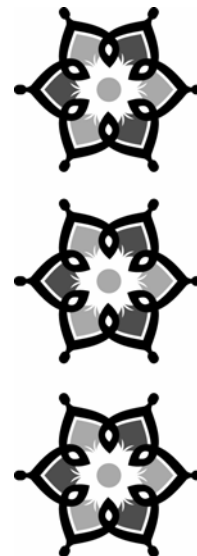
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## **‘Speak Out’ youth forum: a day of dialogue**

### ***Partners***

Speak Out Group  
University College of the Fraser Valley - Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies

### ***Mission***

The South Asian community is progressive and hard working; unfortunately, it is currently facing many negative perceptions within society. These negative perceptions are often directed towards South Asian youth and tend to overshadow this community’s positive aspects. As a result, Speak Out is proposing to host a youth forum which will help create dialogue amongst South Asian youth regarding these negative stereotypes. This forum will provide youth with an environment in which they can discuss the issues and allow Speak Out, through community collaboration, to implement viable solutions

### ***The Speak Out group***

The Speak Out group is comprised of nine student leaders who attended Abbotsford secondary schools and currently attend academic institutions such as the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the University College of the Fraser Valley. These students are committed to the community of Abbotsford and its youth and wish to take an active role in bettering this community. Furthermore, this group is supported by an Abbotsford Police Sergeant and a School District 34 multicultural worker.

### ***Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at UCFV***

The University College of the Fraser Valley’s Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies (CICS) was involved in Speak Out as a partner in the development of outcome based deliverables. As a community consultation, Speak Out has the capacity to inform, educate, and promote the need for dialogue, visioning, collaboration and engagement of various segments of the community. This forum focused on youth empowerment through discourse leading to a commitment from the CICS to further investigate and provide research support to the issues/concerns/ideas. Speak Out is the start of a long-term exercise in the development of services, activities and programs that proactively seek out ways to involve youth in their various initiatives.



## Reporting Back



### ***Abbotsford Youth Forum 2007***

Through the Abbotsford Youth Forum, concerned individuals attempted to provide the students of Abbotsford high schools with a venue for dialogue and discussion. This forum was facilitated by various leaders from the local community. The aim of these discussions was to extract ideas from students and create recommendations which could be passed onto community organizations and government agencies. Eighteen students, 10 facilitators, 16 interventionists spent a day together to discuss issues and concerns facing Indo-Canadian youth in the Canadian mosaic with a concerted goal to make recommendations that can be acted upon.



### ***Consultation format***

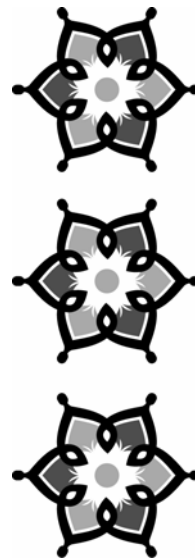
The consultation was designed for a one full day interactive forum style event. Students were invited to a morning of facilitated discussions and an afternoon of planning for outcomes in partnership with interveners: invited stakeholders and engaged citizens. The results of the dialogue and outcomes will be developed in the next few years in response to the voices of youth. These outcomes are the building blocks for developing a community that is strong and responsive and concerned with the issues that you come across in their lives. The strengths of the youth and the rest of the community can be harnessed towards a stronger and more resilient society.

### **Involved schools**

Abbotsford Collegiate  
Dasmesh Punjabi School  
Mennonite Educational Institute  
Rick Hansen Senior Secondary  
Robert Bateman Senior Secondary  
W.J. Mouat Senior Secondary

### **Intervenors**

Abbotsford City Council  
Abbotsford Community Services  
Abbotsford Police  
Abbotsford School Board  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Community members  
Kwantlen University College  
Ministry of Children and Family Development - Special Advisor: Youth Initiative  
Parents  
School District #34  
University College of the Fraser Valley  
University students



## ***The forum***

Abbotsford School District Multicultural Counselor Bo Sidhu opened the forum and set the tone for a safe and open dialogue for the day. Dr Skip Bassford, President of UCFV, welcomed students to the campus and wished the participants a fruitful and meaningful day of deliberations.

## ***Video presentation***

The Speak Out group created a PowerPoint presentation which was shown to the students at the beginning of the forum. The presentation used pictures obtained on the internet to portray the journey of the South Asian community in Canada over the years. The main goal of the slideshow was to remind the students of the positive attributes of the South Asian community instead of focusing on the all too often highlighted negative stereotypes. The images emphasized the South Asian community's achievements over the years. These photographs of the first Sikh Temple in the lower mainland, the first RCMP wearing a turban, and the first Indo-Canadian premier showcased landmarks in the community's history. The Speak Out group wanted to inspire students to look beyond the images that are portrayed on the news and get a full understanding of how far our community has come.

Members of the Speak Out-group laid out the goals for the day and hoped that the outcomes of the day's consultation would bring about change.

## ***Dialogue***

**Student Consultation:** Due to the small number of students, the morning discussion was broken up into two groups of students led by skilled facilitators. Each group took a different approach to the discussion format. Group 1 was led by facilitators using a question and answer style discussion while the facilitators for Group 2 opted to use smaller groups to brainstorm ideas. Each group discussed and followed ground rules of respect, safety and confidentiality.

**Interventionists' Discussion:** Both formats produced excellent results that were collated into themes and recommendations by members of the Speak Out group for an afternoon plenary. A PowerPoint presentation was made to the interventionists and participants with a goal to work towards tangible outcomes. Kelly Chahal, a skilled facilitator, facilitated the plenary and gleaned valuable information from the interveners, student participants and community members.



## Emerging Discussion Themes: What Was Said



### ***Immigration status***

There seems to be a split between first, second and third generation in the community. Does it really matter? Does it reflect at risk behaviors? Is status so important that we are willing to risk our connections with each other? There appears to be a real disconnect between the generations of youth – especially with new immigrant youth. Lack of knowledge of settlement issues is prevalent amongst youth who have been born here. New immigrant Indo Canadian youth face many difficulties and one of them is peer disengagement. Name-calling is associated with status – like making fun of new immigrants – it is seen as a way of increasing your credit in front of your friends. It is easier to make fun of people who are different – it doesn't matter what group you belong to, the status quo finds ways to maintain their higher status and ridicule is one way (eg. using hurtful and disparaging words like 'dippers', 'FOB', etc.).



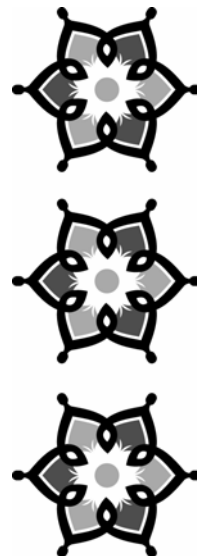
### ***Parents***

Parents face great economic pressure to work hard and they are more into making money and having status (in relationship to their status in India). However, we cannot blame them because they are doing it for their children's future – so that their children do not have to face the hardships that they did. As a result of this “race to be the best”, parents are sacrificing good communication with their children. They are so concerned about keeping the “family name” in good standing and the reputation of their children based on community standards that they are not listening to their children's needs. Greed and the need for status is sometimes dictating the growing divide between children and their parents – with parents working harder and harder and ignoring their children's needs. Parents may inadvertently not acknowledge their children's needs due to fear, especially if they do not have the tools and resources to deal with emerging issues. Youth may in turn feel that their parents just don't care about them and are only interested in working and gaining material wealth.

### ***Extremism***

Gender roles are greatly prescribed and there are many differences in expectations and interactions between boys and girls in the community and with parents. For example, there is a condition of no pre-marital sex, but this is especially focused on girls. Many other inhibiting factors are strongly imposed on girls whereas boys have it much easier. There are strict rules about no alcohol consumption – again especially against girls. So what happens when people are involved in these activities? No one talks about it in the open:

- How does the community respond? No one knows because it is kept quiet.
- What can be done?



### **Values, beliefs, judgments**

Certain values dictate our daily lives – if you do one bad thing, your good deeds from the past and any possible future good deeds become erased and you are forever stereotyped as “bad”. What *is* focused upon is your mistakes, but the focus should be on what you have learned from your mistakes. We have to check our actions and deeds daily, whether they align with parent and community expectations.

- How is this related to loneliness and isolation? Not feeling Indian or Canadian enough and not having avenues to express yourself because things are kept under wraps and not openly talked about.

### **Drugs and violence**

There are not enough things to do in the community - there is only skating and movies, so kids may turn to drugs. Drug dealers command both fear and respect. They might demand this respect because they feel like they don't belong and are looking for ways to have status. Youth are idolizing the wrong people – seeing wealth and status as the ultimate goal, the need to fit in and using the family (good economic status) as the safety net, because youth feel they don't have to work or make a living. Parents encourage that sometimes too. Like parents, children are also chasing status and wealth but in a different way in different environments and with different means. If you are labeled as “bad” as discussed above, then you may feel there is no way to re-gain status, and drugs can be seen as a lucrative endeavor. Therefore, a route for achieving status can be through money.

### **Communication**

What does it really mean? It might be a problem because some parents might be illiterate and cannot get truly engaged. Do we attempt to communicate ourselves? What is open communication – without fear – and how do we communicate? Parents and youth need open communication. Many youth are communicating well but there are many who cannot get their messages across.

- Both parties want each other's well-being, but how do you communicate that?





## Recommendations



### ***Profile careers***

- Bring exposure to different types of professions for parents to be aware of choices
- Provide information in different languages about careers, education etc.
- Use local newspapers to reach the community with information
- Hold career fairs for parents in the languages they understand



### ***Access to information and resources***

- Instead of focusing on the negative, media could highlight different resources available
- Need to advertise or promote programs better
- Have more cultural programs in schools and provide resource information there

### ***Youth involvement***

- Need more venues for discussion that is open to all students
- Get more involved in our parent's lives – find ways to express ourselves more

### ***Education for parents***

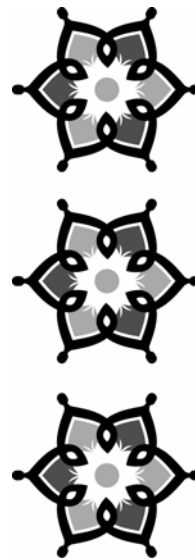
- Promote involvement in schools and school events
- Explain the relevance of extra-curricular activities to future goals
- More interaction with other cultures
- Computer programs in other languages and access to computer education

### ***Immigration integration***

- Assistance in integration
  - Welcome newcomers in your neighbourhood
  - Help them adjust to the culture without showing authority
- Mentoring programs within high schools
- Take a leadership role yourself

### ***Communication***

- Avenues for parent and child communication are needed.
- Drug education and awareness needs to be increased.
- If parents do not come to events –take the events to them where they meet regularly (like the temples).
- Panels for youth discussion would be beneficial as well as facilitated designed opportunities where parents can listen to what the youth have to say.
- Taboo subjects need to be broached: e.g. safe sex, STD, drug/alcohol use in a safe and comfortable way.



## Interveners' Plenary

- Communication is the key to all successful relationships and in this case it is exacerbated by the fact that there are taboo subjects that no one talks about
- It is not just the responsibility of parents to have open communication but also that of youth to have two-way dialogue that consists of information sharing (e.g. about drugs that parents have little or no information about)
- Parents and youth need to come to an understanding of collective orientation and what it means – it is not a one way street, rather one where sharing and opening up for both sides would mean that they would have to expose their own biases and judgments
- Youth are selective in their demands – on one hand they want social status (like cars, good clothes etc.) which they can get from the economic successes of their parents but on the other hand they don't want to take any advice given by the same parents based on their experience, wisdom and knowledge
- Youth should be soul-searching (their own attitudes) at the same time that they are criticizing their parents attitudes and beliefs
- Sometimes there are negative reactions from parents on youth lifestyles but it is better to confront those than to hide them (or worse still lie about them)
- Youth are faced with popularity and what is cool from their peers while under pressure from parents about being smart at school and excelling. Youth need support to face up to these competing demands
- There are cultural barriers to social and cultural integration by parents into Canadian society and youth can get involved by involving their parents in the Canadian experiences like explaining the value of extra curricular sports, activities etc.
- Through the last century various communities have faced prejudice and discrimination in Canada, we need to work together to establish good communication between communities and each other
- There are always inter-generational issues but if there are early interventions (when children are young) and youth and parents are encouraged to stay involved in each other's lives then some of the difficulties can be faced with better perspectives
- After school activities need to be fostered for youth and parents – an involved child is less likely to get into trouble
- Parental guidance is very important for youth and as a City we need to foster the learning and working together model for families
- Values are things children are taught from when they are very small, the wisdom of elders should not be negated, rather new ideas can be accommodated with old ones as long as people stay involved with each other and their communities
- There are many examples (like today) which show how people care enough to act
- As communities redefine themselves in a global context how do we find new solutions to old problems?
- There needs to be changing perceptions regarding rights and gender issues



## **Outcomes**



### ***Career Fair***

UCFV Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies: Career Fair for Indo Canadian parents to be designed and implemented in January/February 2008 at two venues in collaboration with UCFV, the Sikh Temples and schools in SD #34.



### ***Parent workshops***

UCFV Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies: Parent workshops to be developed and introduced to the community in November 2007

### ***Mentoring programs***

Big Brother, Big Sisters: Work towards reaching out to the Indo Canadian community

### ***Resources***

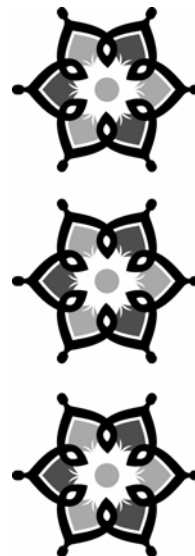
Abbotsford Community Services: Information and resources in the community – build on disseminating information

## **Lessons Learned**

The planning process for the Abbotsford Youth Forum was started one year prior to the holding of the event. The Speak Out Group opted to use a hands-on approach in their recruitment of students to attend this forum. Members of Speak Out contacted the principals of six Abbotsford high schools and set up preliminary meetings. During these meetings, the group members outlined their ideas to the principals and sought their support. Once commitment from all six high schools had been secured, the Speak Out Group drafted registration forms (see Appendix D for Registration Form) for high school students.

For over a month, the Speak Out group made presentations at the different high schools, corresponded with teachers and administrators at the high schools, and personally interacted with the high school students. These efforts were seen as successful by the Speak Out group as they were able to collect 70 registration forms from across the five high schools. The number of registered students from each high school reflected the ethnic makeup of the larger student body. On the day of the forum, 18 of the registered 70 students were present.

As partners of Speak Out in the Abbotsford Forum, the UCFV Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies helped recruit facilitators for the forum. The Centre approached faculty members and community members believed to possess the skills required to lead an effective discussion. Many of the individuals approached committed to the role of a facilitator. The Speak Out Group met with Kelly Chahal and developed a facilitator manual and received facilitator training. The a training session covering the facilitator manual and topics to be discussed was to be held with the facilitators organized by the Centre two weeks prior to the forum.



However, this meeting was held on the day of the forum. The facilitators recruited by the Centre were partnered with members of Speak Out, resulting in two team-led student discussions.

### **Challenges**

- Low student turn-out
- Facilitators should not be briefed on the day of (creates ambiguity and confusion)
- Lack of participation on behalf of administrators (principals/leadership teachers did not show up)
- Accessibility of venue
- Spreading the word

### **Recommendations on the challenges**

- Perhaps having the forum on a school day with buy-in from specific teachers (like CAPP) would have been more beneficial
- Perhaps choosing a day that is not at the beginning of a holiday season (like spring break)
- There should be incentives for students to attend (not just food) - like credits towards a class or a certificate for attendance etc.
- Having an administrative liaison in the school (not just the Principal or Vice-Principal) who would actively take on the role of getting registrations done
- Targeted marketing with newspapers - regardless of the one-on-one approach at the schools, this approach might also help
- A separate training session for the facilitator prior to the forum (a week or two before) is needed – to make sure everyone is on the same page
- In order to legitimize and acknowledge how important it is for youth to attend these forums and become involved, the dedicated youth developing the forum might be accompanied by established and credible individuals from the community when approaching schools.
- Perhaps choosing a more central location that may be easier for students to access
- More advertising could have occurred (at the Sikh temple and other central community locations – hype it up!). Make students WANT to attend the forum.

### **Pearls of wisdom**

- “Values that create struggles many times end up being valued later on.”
- “It takes a lot of courage to let them [parents] know that you value them and value their values.”
- “Parents should be the #1 people to go to for children.”
- “Parents don’t trust the world around the girl. It is not necessarily that they don’t trust the girl.”
- “We have to wait it [status issues] out to the next generation and it will be gone.”
- “Create a cycle to integrate into the multicultural environment, not just the Indian environment.”



## APPENDIX A



### *About Speak Out*

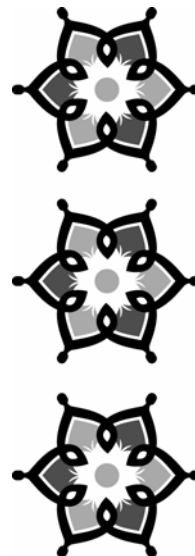


Speak Out consists of nine university students and graduates who all share the same goal, which is to see our local community grow and prosper, instead of hide in the shadows of violence and animosity. Our members include Pavan Dhaliwal, Jason Dhami, Anu Ghuman, Karam Gill, Karry Kainth, Aman Oberoi, Satvir Oberoi, Navi Rattan, and Sanjay Singh. The Speak Out members all graduated from Abbotsford secondary schools, thus having a bond and commitment in seeing Abbotsford's community thrive. Speak Out also consists of one other individual, Sgt. Shinder Kirk, who has helped Speak Out see its visions become reality.

Speak Out saw that there were many people in Abbotsford asking for something to be done about all the negative publicity that was coming the community's way; with the many recent murders and gang violence incidents. Speak Out decided to take initiative and create a place where Abbotsford's youth could freely discuss what they think to be the problems facing their everyday lives.

Speak Out addressed this issue in the form of a community consultation. This initial community consultation only heard from South Asian youth. However, Speak Out plans to host future forums where it plans to invite community youth who are more representative of Abbotsford's ethnic make-up.

In July of 2006, this group of visionary youth approached the Centre for Indo Canadian Studies, guided by Sgt. Shinder Kirk of the Abbotsford Police to develop a response to issues facing Indo Canadian youth in the community – both real and perceived. The Centre responded by creating a partnership to host a forum for Indo Canadian youth to be led by these youth. The journey to bring youth to the table (so to speak) was an interesting, learning experience. This report documents a day of learning and listening.



## APPENDIX B

### *Forum introduction*

#### **How many people will be invited?**

- 100 local Abbotsford high school students
- Approximately 50 various community/provincial leaders

#### **What schools and age groups are being represented?**

Grade 10-12 students from the following high schools:

- Abbotsford Collegiate
- Dasmesh Punjabi School
- Rick Hansen Secondary
- Robert Bateman Secondary
- W.J. Mouat Secondary
- Yale Secondary

#### **What exactly are the students going to do at the forum?**

Students will break off into groups in the morning and discuss various issues that are currently plaguing the South Asian community. In the afternoon, all students will assemble in a general meeting area and draw upon the main issues that were identified/discussed in each of the smaller groups. It is with regards to these main issues that we hope to have the interveners (community/provincial leaders) offer their solutions/resources. This forum will provide youth with an opportunity to speak out and work towards solutions on their issues and concerns.

#### **The Solutions Committee**

A Solutions Committee, consisting of various individuals with a vested interest in the community of Abbotsford, will be established that will oversee and ensure the implementation of the solutions agreed upon at the March 10, 2007 youth forum. This committee will be guided in its work on the Forum Consultation Report to be prepared by the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at UCFV.



## APPENDIX C



### *Marketing*



#### **Mission**

The South Asian community is progressive and hard working; unfortunately, it is currently facing many negative perceptions within society. These negative perceptions are often directed towards South Asian youth and tend to overshadow this community's positive aspects. As a result, Speak Out is proposing to host a youth forum which will help create dialogue amongst South Asian youth regarding these negative stereotypes. This forum will provide youth with an environment in which they can discuss the issues and allow Speak Out, through community collaboration, to implement viable solutions.

#### **The Speak Out group**

The Speak Out group is comprised of nine university student leaders, who attended Abbotsford secondary schools, and are committed to the community of Abbotsford and its youth and wish to take an active role in bettering the community. These students currently attend academic institutions such as Simon Fraser University, the University College of the Fraser Valley and the University of British Columbia. Additionally, this group is supported by the University College of the Fraser Valley, one Abbotsford police sergeant and one School District multi-cultural worker.

#### **Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies (CICS) at UCFV**

The University College of the Fraser Valley's Centre for Indo Canadian Studies (CICS) is involved in Speak Out as a partner in the development of outcome based deliverables. As a community consultation Speak Out has the capacity to inform, educate and promote the need for dialogue, visioning, collaboration and engagement of various segments of the community. This forum will focus on youth empowerment through discourse leading to a commitment from the CICS to further investigate and provide research support to the issues/concerns/ideas. Speak Out is the start of a long-term exercise in the development of services, activities and programs that proactively seek out ways to involve youth in their various initiatives.

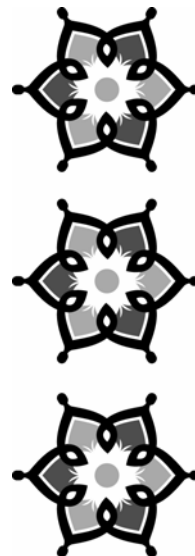
#### **Concluding words**

Please support Saturday, March 10, 2007 as the first step in the development and implementation of youth focused delivery models for Indo Canadian youth. One hundred local Abbotsford high school students will be invited to attend the forum with an objective to be engaged in discussion, ideas and plans. Forging partnerships with local community members, businesses, educators and supporters is vital to the success of this initiative.

**Forum Date:** Saturday, March 10, 2007

**Forum Time:** 10 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

**Forum Venue:** University College of the Fraser Valley (Abbotsford campus)



## APPENDIX D

### *Forum registration*

This registration form is for Speak Out's Youth Forum, which is going to be held on Saturday, March 10, 2007 at the University College of the Fraser Valley (Abbotsford Campus). Please complete the following and sign at the bottom. Once completed, please submit to your principal by Wednesday, February 7, 2007.

First Name:

Last Name:

Address:

Postal Code:

Home Phone:

Other Phone:

Email:

Current Grade:

High School:

I understand and consent to the following:

1. Pictures of students, such as me, may be taken at the forum – for promotional purposes (for future forums).
2. I may be contacted in the future, to see whether or not I would like to participate at a similar event.
3. My name may be printed on a formal document (for purposes of attendance) that discusses the particulars of the forum; however, any ideas or comments made by me will not be associated with my name and therefore, my identity not revealed.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





## APPENDIX E



### *Individuals and Groups*



#### **Speak Out group:**

- Pavan Dhaliwal
- Jason Dhami
- Anu Ghuman
- Karam Gill
- Karry Kainth
- Aman Oberoi
- Satvir Oberoi
- Navi Rattan
- Sanjay Singh

#### **The Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at UCFV**

- Yvon Dandurand, Dean of Research (UCFV)
- Satwinder Bains, Director (CICS)

#### **Consultants**

- Sgt. Shinder Kirk, Abbotsford Police

#### **Key facilitators**

- Bo Sidhu
- Kelly Chahal

#### **Research assistants**

- Caitlin Williams (UCFV)
- Preena Maan (UCFV)

This report was written by Satwinder Bains, Director of the Centre for Indo Canadian Studies at the University College of the Fraser Valley in collaboration with the Speak Out Group. August, 2007.

For more information or if you require copies of the report please contact:

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