

From: Pritpal Kaur

Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 12:05 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Superintendent; Satjeet Kaur; Deep Singh; education; SBE

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Sikh Inclusion in ESMC: Third Field Draft Review Public Comment Submission

Dear Superintendent Thurmond, California Department of Education, Instructional Quality Commission and State Board of Education,

We write to provide feedback to be entered into the public record for the ESMC third draft field review. First, we wish to reiterate what we shared in November 2020:

We would like to recognize your support in listening to the groundswell of urgent calls from the Sikh community for meaningful and accurate representation in the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

*As the two leading Sikh organizations dedicated to ensure that Sikh contributions are finally seen in our California public education system, we are appreciative that the CDE has taken the necessary steps to propose some form of meaningful and accurate representation of Sikh Americans in California. This includes the commitment to taking our suggestions and line edits which were made during the March 2020 public comment period and including our Sikh lesson plan (**Sample Lesson 39: The Sikh-American Community in California**), which was submitted as a resource in the Appendix alongside other communities.*

These are positive developments that demonstrate the importance of Sikh inclusion in this process. However, we are calling for the Sikh American lesson plan (and any additional lesson plans from Asian communities that are currently in the proposed Appendix) to be included in the Asian American unit. Given that the majority of the Sikh population in California is South Asian, the optimal fit for this content remains in the Asian American unit as one of the four main Ethnic Studies categories.

Thank you for taking feedback from the California Sikh community and remaining responsive to addressing the feedback that comes from other experts representing other marginalized communities in California. We remain committed to working with the CDE, IQC and SBE to ensure a rigorous ESMC.

Second, we wish to provide feedback on the additional lesson plans that since have been included, which refer to the Sikh American community:

Sample Lesson 30: Indian American Diaspora, Myths of the Model Minority

Sample Lesson 33: South Asian Americans in the United States

Sample Lesson 34: Building Empathy

Sample Lesson 35: Xenophobic Racism Against South Asians and Muslims: Past & Present

The addition of these lesson plans in the AAPI section of the latest ESMC draft, justify the fact that the optimal placement of our lesson plan (**Sample Lesson 39: The Sikh-American Community in California**) should be alongside these, not in the Appendix.

Furthermore, we wish to provide points of concern regarding content in the additional lesson plans which require scrutiny by the CDE, IQC and SBE before they are finalized:

1.

In Lesson 30, the terms
Indian and
South Asian

should not be used interchangeably. We suggest that it is more appropriate and accurate to use the term

South Asian
consistently throughout the lesson plan.

2. In Lesson 34, it should be ensured that there is no conflation between Islam and terrorism. Many of the quotes used in the sources can be easily taken out of context and propagate that association if this distinction is not made clear.

3. In Lesson 35, it should be made clear that the broad references to
Hindoos, *Hindus*

or *South Asians*
regarding the Bellingham Riots actually refer to Sikhs, who were misidentified by the press at the time.

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See the following news article which makes the distinction that *““Hindu” was the common label in Canada and the U.S. for all East Indians, though most early 20th century immigrants from India were Sikhs from the Punjab region.”*
<https://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article22195713.html>)

- See the Sikh Coalition’s teacher resources about the Bellingham Riots which provide greater detail about the Sikh community specifically being targeted (<https://www.sikhcoalition.org/get-involved/resources-for-educators/middle-high-school-resources/bellingham-riots-resources/>).

We remain committed to working with you in order to ensure an accurate and representative ESMC. Please don't hesitate to contact the Sikh Coalition's education team at [email redacted] to address any of the points brought up in this letter in more detail.

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Executive Director
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