

PROMOTING SUCCESS WITH  
**INDIAN** IMMIGRANT  
STUDENTS  
.....  
TEACHER RESOURCES



Canadian  
**Multicultural Education**  
FOUNDATION

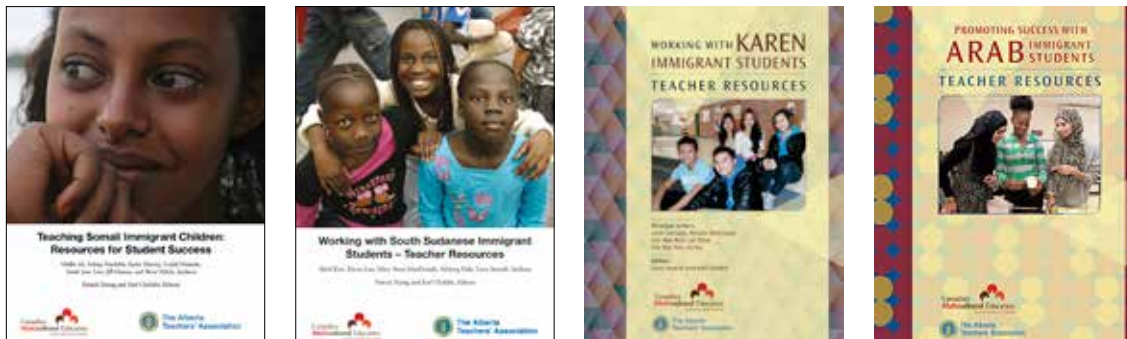


The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

This resource has been prepared with funding assistance from  
**Alberta Culture and Community Services**  
**Community Initiatives Program.**

Please copy freely and provide acknowledgement. The materials will also be available at the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation website: [www.cmef.ca](http://www.cmef.ca).

Other resources in this series:



The booklet is part of a series developed by the Alberta Multicultural Education Foundation in partnership with the Alberta Teachers' Association. The others are available at [www.cmef.ca/resources/connections/](http://www.cmef.ca/resources/connections/). They cover students from South Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, Arab countries, Central Africa, and Karen refugee families.

Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation  
PO Box 52063 Garneau  
Edmonton AB T6G 2T5  
E-mail: [admin@cmef.ca](mailto:admin@cmef.ca)

Alberta Teachers' Association  
11010 142 Street NW  
Edmonton Alberta T5N 2R1  
Phone: 780-447-9400  
[www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)

Author: Earl Choldin  
Editor: Andrea Berg

Published February 2020

# Introduction



Immigrant students are both a challenge and an opportunity. Coming from a different school culture, they may have difficulty adjusting to your expectations and those of their classmates. They may have expectations you cannot meet. They may have difficulty making friends. They may be struggling with the differences between the culture back home and the culture of Canada. They may be distracted by family stressors as their parents look for housing and jobs, deal with bureaucracy and debts, and struggle through their own adjustment. And, of course, there may be a language problem for both parents and children.

On the other side of those challenges are the opportunities to enrich yourself and your class with another culture, different stories and experiences, different ways of seeing the world and new resources. Even if you already have Indian students in your class, as you will discover through this booklet, there is remarkable diversity among Indians, and your new students may well bring a new culture to your classroom.

This booklet will provide you basic information about India and its cultures. It will explore how the education system in India may impact your immigrant students' experience here. Finally, it will provide suggestions on how to promote your students' success and how to further your study of India.

## Acknowledgements

Author: Earl Choldin

Andrea Berg

Gurcharan Bhatia

Sonia Aujla-Bhullar

Sandra Bit

Alexandrea Bowes

Yuet Chan

Sudha Choldin

Harvey Choldin

Markiana Cyncar-Hrychuk

Cecille DePass

Mona Gill

Betty Joseph

Manikarnika Kanjilal

Susana Kaup

Tracy Kolenchuk

Kamini Prakash

Sarmistha Roy

Anju Sharma

Veena Sharma

Uttam Sharma

Kamal Sehgal

Raj Sheshadri

Dwain Tymchyshyn

Lubna Zaeem



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

Canadian  
Multicultural Education  
FOUNDATION





# Contents



Background Information | 5

Sources of Identity | 7

Religions | 9

Family Life and Customs | 11

The Arts | 14

Sports | 15

Indian Languages – How They Impact English Language Learners | 16

Indian Schools | 18

Indian immigration to Canada | 20

Promoting the Success of Indo-Canadian Students | 21

Parents Orientation Guide | 24

Appendix | 35



WIKIPEDIA

# Background Information

India is a huge and diverse nation. With an area of 3.3 million square kilometers, it is as big as Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba combined. In 2016, it had a population of 1.3 billion, second only to China. There are 22 official languages and many more spoken languages. The majority of the people are Hindu, but 172 million are Muslims and there are large populations of Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Animists. The climate varies from tropical in the south to temperate in the Himalayan north. It is home to some of the richest people in the world and many of the poorest.

This introduction will provide a quick overview. The appendix (p 35) will direct you to where you can find more information.

## Geography and Weather

India shares the South Asia peninsula with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal. Between the Himalayas in the north and the Indian Ocean in the south are a variety of ecosystems, ranging from the deserts of Rajasthan to the tropical forests of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The monsoons in June are the major weather events. These torrential rains from the Arabian Sea (to the west) bring relief from the extreme dry heat of April and May. The weather then continues to cool until January, when the heat begins to build again.

## History

India's written history can be traced to the Indus Valley civilization, which lasted from 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE, located in what is now Pakistan. This civilization is notable for its skill at urban planning, and it developed some of the world's earliest known major cities. The largest of those cities—Mohenjo-daro—had an estimated population of between 30,000 and 60,000. The Vedas, the Sanskrit scriptures on which Hinduism is based, were written in communities that formed part of the Indus civilization. In the fifth century BCE, Buddhism and Jainism emerged as reform movements of Hinduism.

Throughout its 5,000-year history, India has at times been ruled by a single emperor, like Ashoka in the third century BC, or by various regional kings. Over the centuries there were many invaders from the northwest, such as Darius from Persia in 517 BC and Alexander the Great from Greece in 325 BC. Later, from about 1000 AD, there were invasions of Muslim warriors from Afghanistan. In the 16th century, the Moguls invaded northern India from the northwest, and by the 18th century they had unified India. They built the Taj Mahal and magnificent forts and mosques. However, their empire eventually fell to other Indian kings and the British.

The British came to India in the early 17th century, establishing trading posts in Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bombay (now Mumbai) and Madras (now Chennai). From those trading posts they expanded their power and

built a colonial governmental structure. By the mid-19th century they ruled all of India, either directly or indirectly through vassal Indian kings.

The Indian movement for independence can be traced to a revolt of Indian soldiers in 1857. In 1885 the Congress Party was formed. Starting in the 1920s the Congress Party led nonviolent resistance to the British under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and others. In 1947, India regained its independence. The victory, however, was at the cost of India being divided into two states: the Republic of India—a secular state with a Hindu majority—and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, itself divided into West Pakistan and East Pakistan. In 1971, East Pakistan seceded from Pakistan in a civil war and established itself as the independent nation of Bangladesh.

## Government and politics

---

India is a federal parliamentary democracy. It has 29 states and seven union territories. For many years after independence, the central (federal) government was controlled by the left-leaning Congress Party, which had played a leading role in the struggle for independence. Since 2014, the central government has been controlled by the BJP, a right-leaning party committed to Hindu nationalism. The prime minister is Narendra Modi.

## Economy

---

The economy of India is growing at seven per cent per year, one of the fastest rates in the world. It is diversified in agriculture, manufacturing and services, with a large and fast-growing IT sector. It has a large and growing middle class and some of the richest people in the world. At the same time, it has hundreds of millions of poor people, both urban and rural. It has several outstanding universities and graduates millions of people every year. At the same time, tens of millions of people are illiterate, especially women and people in rural communities.

## International relations

---

Since the partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947, relations between the two nations have been tense, particularly around the disposition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, most of which is in the hands of India. Three wars have been fought between the two nations. India is a regional military power, with three million men and women in its armed forces. It is also a nuclear power. It is a major economic power, exporting US\$300 billion of goods in 2017–18, half of that to its Asian neighbours.



# Sources of Identity



Indians draw their identity, their sense of who they are, from several factors, among them, gender, birth order, religion, ethnicity and caste or social class.

## Gender

For many families boys are preferred over girls. Though paying a dowry is illegal, there is often a sizeable dowry paid by a bride's family to a groom's family. By tradition, a man takes care of his parents in old age, whereas a woman takes care of her husband's parents in old age. Finally, for Hindus there are funeral ceremonies that only a son can carry out.

Although prenatal testing to identify gender is illegal in India, it is common, and many female fetuses are aborted each year. This is also true among some Indian families in Canada. Preference for boys is reflected in family dynamics as well. If there is a shortage of resources such as food or money for education, more will go to a son than to a daughter. As a result, male literacy is much higher than female literacy, especially in rural India.

## Birth order

Like Indian society, the traditional Indian family is hierarchical. In a traditional joint family, the oldest son has the highest status and when the father dies, the oldest son takes the father's place as the head of

household. The importance of birth order can be seen in family nomenclature. For example, in Hindi one's father's brothers are not all called "uncles." Instead one's father's older brother is addressed as *taayaa* while the father's younger brother is addressed as *chaacha*.

## Religion

Religion influences many aspects of an Indian's life. Traditionally, marriage is within one's religious community and caste. Religion usually determines diet: few Hindus eat beef; few Muslims eat pork. Religion determines life-cycle rituals: Muslim men are circumcised; most Hindu men are not. Muslims are usually buried; Hindus are usually cremated. Most names are distinctly Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. The temple, mosque, gurdwara or church is a center of social life, especially in Canada. See the appendix on page 35 for Alberta sites.

## Ethnicity

There are many ethnic communities in India: Bengali, Goan, Maharashtrian, Tamil, Sindhi, Assamese, Kashmiri and Malayali, to name a few. They usually correspond to Indian states, but Indian cities are full of people from all over India, and despite this urban ethnic mix, people hold on to their language and culture for generations. Bengalis, for example, identify themselves as Bengali, whether they live in



Bengal or Delhi or Chennai. There is a community of Bengalis in Delhi who usually speak Bengali in their homes while they speak Hindi (the language of Delhi) outside. They usually eat Bengali food. The women usually wear Bengali-style saris. They send their children to a Bengali–English bilingual school. At that school the language of instruction is English; Bengali and Hindi are taught as second-language subjects. A child may have non-Bengali friends but will probably marry another Bengali. The same sense of ethnic identity would be true of Punjabis living in Bengal or Tamils living in Punjab, and so on.

Here in Canada, Indian immigrants do identify themselves first as Indian; however, ethnic identity continues to be important. In Calgary, for example, there is the United Kashmir Youth Association, in Edmonton there is the Tamil Cultural Association, and in Fort McMurray there is the Fort McMurray Bengali Association.

## Caste and social class

Caste and social class are critical to one's identity. Both are hierarchical; however, caste is based on inheritance. One is born into a caste and that caste has a clear place in the hierarchy of society. In rural India caste is a basic unit of society. It determines where one lives, how one lives and whom one can marry. In the cities, social class, for some people, is more important than caste. Social class, unlike caste, does offer some mobility.

## Education

Education gives status. A business card in India will usually include a person's academic qualifications, more often than it would in Canada. India has a huge and rapidly expanding higher education system, reflecting the demand for higher education. It awards seven million bachelor's degrees per year. Some of the institutions are among the best in the world and the competition to get into them is fierce. However, the economy has not expanded as quickly as the education system, and many graduates do not find employment or are underemployed.

# Religions

## Hinduism

Hinduism is a way of life. It influences every aspect of Indian life—family structure, social structure, the arts, government and the way business is conducted. It influences the way one greets a friend, the way one deals with death and what one eats. Many Hindus are vegetarian; almost all Hindus in India do not eat beef because of their reverence for cows.

Hinduism is practiced in different ways. For some Hindus it is the study of the ancient holy books: the Vedas, the Upanishads or the epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana. For some it is meditation. For some it is studying with a guru, a revered spiritual leader. For some it is the worship of a deity such as Krishna, Shiva, Ganesh or Lakshmi through a sacred statue. Worship may be at home or in a *mandir* (temple). For some it is a combination of the above, and for some it is none of the above. For all Hindus it is a sense of identity.

The most important holiday for Hindus is Diwali, the festival of lights, celebrating the victory of good, as represented by Lord Ram, over evil, as represented by Ravana. It comes in late October or November. People decorate their houses and visit friends and neighbours, often bringing Indian sweets. In North India schools are closed for a week.

## Jainism and Buddhism

Jainism and Buddhism became important forces in India in around 500 BC as reform movements of Hinduism. Siddhartha Gautam founded Buddhism. Buddhists believe that through personal spiritual development one can attain understanding of the true meaning of life. Buddhism spread throughout Asia, but in India it was absorbed back into Hinduism. Today there are about 8.5 million Buddhists in India. Jains are a small but influential community in India and in Canada. Nonviolence is a central principle of Jainism, so most Jains are vegetarian. There are about 4.5 million Jains in India.

## Sikhism

Sikhism is a relatively new religion, founded in the late 15th century by Guru Nanak. The fundamental precepts of Sikhism include having belief in the divine unity and equality of all people, engaging in selfless service, and striving for social justice and honest conduct. Guru Nanak was followed by nine more gurus. The tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, stated that the holy scripture—the Sri Guru Granth Sahib—would be the final and eternal guru.

Initiated Sikhs (Amritdhari Sikhs) follow the Sikh Rehat Maryada (code of conduct). In addition to praying and meditating daily, they wear five articles of faith, referred to as the five Ks:

- *kesh*—unshorn hair symbolizing respect for God’s will; covered at all times with a *keski* or *dastaar* (turban)
- *kangha*—a wooden comb representing self-discipline; worn in the hair as a reminder to rid oneself of what is morally undesirable
- *kara*—an iron or steel bracelet; worn on the wrist to signify the oneness and eternity of God (a circle) and as a reminder to use one’s hands to benefit humanity
- *kachhera*—cotton undergarments representing high moral character and fidelity
- *kirpan*—a stylized representation of a sword; must be worn sheathed, wrapped in a cloth belt and next to the body to signify the duty of a Sikh to stand against injustice

Not all Sikhs (in either India or Canada) choose to become initiated; therefore, they may wear some or none of these articles of faith. The kirpan is worn only by initiated Sikhs, however.

The Sikh place of worship is called a *gurdwara*. Alberta has gurdwaras in Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie. There are several Sikh holidays marking the birthday or martyrdom of a guru. These holidays are celebrated at home, in the gurdwara and in the community. The exact date of Guru Nanak’s birthday varies, according to the Indian calendar, but falls in November. Vaisakhi, in April, is another major holiday, celebrating the founding of the Khalsa, or the order of initiated Sikhs.

The Sikh homeland is the state of Punjab in India. According to the 2011 Census of India, there were about 21 million Sikhs in India, less than 2 per cent of the population. However, there are almost half a million Sikhs in Canada, which is almost half the population of Indo-Canadians.

For more information on Sikhism, contact your local gurdwara (see page 38) or visit the following websites:

- World Sikh Organization of Canada ([www.worldsikh.org/resources/](http://www.worldsikh.org/resources/))
- Sikh Foundation of Canada (<https://sikhfoundationcanada.com>)

- Peel District School Board Sikh Faith eModule ([http://articulate.peelschools.org/Articulate/sikhism\\_v08/story\\_html5.html](http://articulate.peelschools.org/Articulate/sikhism_v08/story_html5.html))

## Islam

Followers of Islam are known as Muslims. There are about 170 million Muslims in India. Their fundamental belief is that there is only one God, Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet. Their holy book, the Qur’an, is the word of Allah as received by Mohammed in the seventh century AD. Mohammed is revered as the last and greatest messenger of God. Other prophets, such as Moses and Jesus, are recognized as well. The religion started in the Arabian Peninsula and spread both west to Europe and east to India and beyond.

Observant Muslims pray five times a day. Students may seek a quiet place to pray, particularly on Fridays, the Muslim sabbath. An important holiday for Muslims is Eid al-Fitr, which comes at the end of Ramadan, a 30-day period during which observant Muslims do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset. Because Islam uses a lunar calendar, Eid comes 10 days earlier each year. In 2019 Eid began at sunset on June 4. Another important holiday is Eid al-Adha. At both holidays people offer special prayers and visit family and friends. Children receive new clothes, presents and sweets.

Muslims do not eat any pork products. Observant Muslims will only eat meat that has been butchered in a certain way, known as *halal*. The Muslim house of worship is called a mosque.

## Christianity

There are about 30 million Indian Christians. They live all over the country, with the greatest concentration in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south and in the northeast. Christianity is believed to have been brought to the southwest coast of India by the apostle St Thomas in 54 AD. That area has many Syrian Christian churches. Later colonial powers introduced more people to Christianity. Goa, a former Portuguese colony, is an important center of Catholicism.

# Family Life and Customs



Family relationships are very important, and these relationships are clearly named, which is quite distinct from English. For example, the English term “grandmother” does not identify whether a person is a maternal grandmother (*nani* in Hindi) or paternal grandmother (*dadi* in Hindi). Those distinctions are important in Hindi and are made for all relationships. While there is one English term, “uncle,” that identifies a father’s younger and older brothers, a father’s sister’s husband, a mother’s younger and older brothers and a mother’s sister’s husband, Hindi has five separate terms to name those relatives. For a fascinating list of the 70 Hindi terms for immediate relatives, see [omniglot.com/language/kinship/hindi.htm](http://omniglot.com/language/kinship/hindi.htm).

For most Indians, the term *family* is understood to include parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The traditional family is a joint family—children live with their parents until they marry, and after marriage the couple moves in with the groom’s family. The bride is expected to assist her mother-in-law in the management of the household. Important family decisions involving such things as finances, education and healthcare are made by the patriarch of the family. In Canada, and also in Indian cities, this joint family tradition is changing and becoming more like the Western nuclear family model. However, the extended family and patriarchal tradition still affect the dynamics of family relations.

## Marriage

By tradition, marriages are arranged by the bride’s and groom’s parents, though today the bride and groom often participate in the selection. They meet their prospective mates and have veto power. Generally, Indians believe that parents have the wisdom to make a good selection. Divorce is rare, especially among Hindus. It is not unusual for families in Canada to find a spouse for their child in India.

The marriage ceremony celebrates the joining of the two families. The celebration is often large, extending over a few days, with most of the expenses being borne by the bride’s family. This often includes a dowry given

by the bride's family to the groom's family. Though asking for a dowry is illegal, the custom still prevails.

## Childrearing

The mother–child bond is very close, created by strong physical contact during early childhood. Breast feeding may last until age two or three, and it is common for mother and baby to share a bed. It is also common for a mother to feed her young child from her hand, to provide a daily massage and to indulge her child to keep him or her (more often him) happy. Whereas many Western parents promote independence, Indian parents more often promote interdependence among parents, siblings and other extended family members.

## Hospitality

Hospitality is an important value. A guest will always be offered a beverage and the host will feel uncomfortable if the guest does not accept at least a glass of water; if a meal is being served, a guest will be implored to eat more. When leaving a home, a guest will usually be seen not only to the door, but to the street; if in an office building, a guest will be seen to the elevator.

## Personal space

Personal space boundaries are much closer in India than in the west. Physical contact with the same gender is common. In India women will hold hands with each other, and men will hold hands with each other, with no sexual implications. On the other hand, men and women, even if married, usually do not make physical contact in public.

## Body language

Indians in India frequently use a head motion similar to a horizontal “no” with a slight side-to-side bobble. This gesture may mean “OK,” “maybe” or “I am listening.” Numerous YouTube clips demonstrate this head nod, for example, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj56IPJOqWE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj56IPJOqWE).

## Greetings

When first seeing a holy statue at a Hindu temple, worshippers will put their hands together in prayer and say *namaste*. Similarly, when meeting a person for the first time that day, one would greet him or her with the same prayerful hands and say *namaste*. This gesture conveys the meaning of “I honor the holy in you.” For Muslims, the appropriate greeting is *assalam u alaikum*, which means “peace be with you.”

## Sexuality

Traditionally, sex outside of marriage is frowned upon. Marriages are arranged and there is no dating. However, in India's large urban centres, these traditions are being relaxed somewhat. Likewise, extramarital relations are frowned upon. On the other hand, there are thousands of films about couples falling in love, and there is a thriving sex-trade industry in cities and small towns alike. Homosexual relations are frowned upon by many people. However, in September 2018, the Supreme Court of India threw out the laws that made homosexual relations illegal.

## Healthcare

There are three systems of healthcare in India. Most people consult doctors trained in Western medicine. However, many people also consult doctors trained in the Ayurvedic system of medicine, which developed in India over many centuries. Some people also consult practitioners of homeopathic medicine, which originated in Germany. Many people use all three systems, depending on the problem. There are practitioners of Ayurvedic and homeopathic medicine in Alberta.

## Food

There are several regional styles of food in India. The Indian food Canadians are most familiar with is from northern India. The staple of that regional style is a kind of wheat-based bread. It can be baked in a tandoor oven (*naan*), on a griddle (*chapatti*) or deep

fried (*puri*). It is traditionally served hot and prepared one at a time for diners as they eat. Along with the bread, the meal usually includes vegetable and/or meat curries, a lentil dish and yogurt. Traditionally Hindus don't eat beef, though some Hindus eat other meats. Muslims don't eat pork.

The staple of south Indian food is rice. The rice is served boiled or in the form of a *dosa*, a very thin crepe made from a fermented rice-flour batter. Like Naan, a *dosa* is also served fresh off the griddle, prepared as diners eat. South Indian curries are similar to North Indian curries except the vegetables are cut more finely and the spices are different. Both north Indian and south Indian curries are richly spiced but not necessarily hot. The level of heat depends on family or individual preference.

## Women's clothing

In cities many young women now wear jeans, but the most common traditional women's dress in India is a sari. The design, the wrap and the cloth vary by the ethnicity, social class and age of the woman, and by the occasion for which it is worn. Instructions for the correct way to wrap a sari can be found online, at websites such as [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1XbPDqF0GQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1XbPDqF0GQ).

A wedding sari, like a wedding dress in Canada, is made from fine cloth such as silk or crepe and usually heavily decorated with embroidery, beads, gemstones and crystals. As with Western wedding dresses, a wedding sari may be worn only that one time in a

woman's life. Red is the traditional colour of a wedding sari, but they come in every colour of the rainbow.

Originally Punjabi women, but now women all over India, wear a two-garment outfit called a *salwar kameez*. *Salwar* are loose fitting pants gathered at the ankles and the *kameez* is a tunic top. Women traditionally wear a light scarf over the *kameez* called a *dupatta*, which rests across the shoulders.

Women and girls may wear a *bindi*, a decorative dot in the middle of the forehead, the colour chosen to augment their dress. Some married women wear red *kumkum* powder in the part of their hair.

## Men's clothing

Middle-class urban men, when outside the home, generally wear Western-style clothes, with the exception of politicians and social activists, many of whom wear clothes made of *khadi*, which is cloth made from homespun yarn. This tradition comes from the independence movement, during which Mahatma Gandhi organized a boycott of British machine-made cloth. Millions of people took up spinning yarn at home, which began the tradition of wearing clothes made of homespun yarn.

In northern India, poor or middle-class men may wear more comfortable pajama pants at home. They are usually white and worn with a loose shirt called a *kurta*. In rural villages some men wear a *dhoti*, a 15-metre-long white cloth wrapped around the waist and legs and knotted at the waist. Wrapping instructions

can be found at [youtube.com/watch?v=2PqH9QstFk](http://youtube.com/watch?v=2PqH9QstFk). In Bengal and in southern India, an alternative garment for men is a *lungi*, a coloured cloth wrapped around the waist.

## School children

**School children** wear a uniform to school. Boys wear slacks or shorts and a shirt; girls wear a skirt and blouse or *salwar kameez*. Play clothes might be the same, or jeans or shorts and t-shirts.



# The Arts



India has rich traditions across all of the arts. In literature, there are outstanding authors both in the Indian languages and in English. In 1913 Bengali Rabindranath Tagore was awarded a Nobel prize in literature. Outstanding contemporary English language writers include Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and V S Naipul. Rohinton Mistry and Anita Rau Badami are outstanding Indo-Canadian authors. Jhumpa Lahri writes about the Indian experience in North America, making her work particularly useful for Canadian teachers. More authors are listed in appendix of this booklet on page 35.

Music is an important part of Indian culture. Classical music is performed in a small group, usually including a string instrument like a *sitar* or a *sarod*, and a percussion instrument called a *tabla*. Improvisation and interaction between musicians are important. Two specific musical forms of note are *bajaans*, Hindu devotional songs, and *ghazals*, Urdu poems set to music. Both Edmonton and Calgary have a Ragamala Society that presents professional performances of Indian classical music and dance. As well, performances are available to view on YouTube.

Popular music often comes from films. It is readily available on Indian radio programs, the Internet and through touring groups.

India has the largest film industry in the world, colloquially referred to as Bollywood. It produces 2000 feature films per year in various Indian languages including English and Hinglish [see page 16]. Popular films are



TRACY KOLENCHUK

**Dancer Riya Mittal**

usually three hours long, based on a love story, and include song and dance interludes. Some films deal with social issues, and there is also a strong tradition of artistic films. An outstanding director of films dealing with social issues is Indo-Canadian Deepa Mehta, whose trilogy of films *Fire*, *Earth* and *Water* examine sometimes difficult and taboo subjects. Indian films are available in theatres in Calgary and Edmonton and on Netflix and YouTube. *The Lunchbox*, *The Namesake* and *Monsoon Wedding*, will entertain you and give you insight into Indian life. More films are listed in the appendix.

Many Indo-Canadian youths study Indian classical dance. There are several different traditions, among them *bharata natyam* from Tamil Nadu, *kathak* from North India and *kathakali* from Kerala. *Bhangra* is an energetic Punjabi folk dance that was originally part of wedding celebrations and is now popular on dance floors, both in India and in Canada.



# Sports

The most popular sport in India is cricket. Football (soccer), field hockey, badminton, tennis, table tennis, wrestling and basketball are also popular. There is a uniquely Indian sport called *kabaddi*, which is like an organized team-tag game. It is not complicated and requires no equipment, and your Indian students could teach it to their classmates.



WIKIPEDIA

# Indian Languages

## How They Impact English Language Learners

There are too many languages in India to provide an analysis of each one here. In this booklet we will provide a discussion of Hindi/Urdu, the most common language, spoken by 40 percent of the population, in most of the states in northern India. Other languages of the same Aryan language family are also spoken in northern India, among them Punjabi (closely related to Hindi), Gujarati, Bengali, Oriya and Marathi.

As spoken languages and in terms of everyday vocabulary, Hindi and Urdu are the same and often called Hindustani. They are written in different scripts, however. Hindi is written in Devanagari or Sanskrit script while Urdu is written in Arabic or Persian script. At higher levels the vocabulary differs, Hindi drawing from Sanskrit and Urdu drawing from Persian and Arabic. Muslims usually call the language Urdu. Hindus usually call the language Hindi.

There are several sounds in Hindi/Urdu that are not used in English. For example, there is a sound similar to the English *d* but made with the tongue close to the top front teeth. There is another sound similar to the English *d* but made with the tongue touching the pallet. Words made with the first *d* sound have a completely different meaning than words made with the second, as different as the difference between “train” and “drain.” Usually native English speakers

cannot even hear the difference between the two sounds.

Similarly, the *w* sound doesn’t exist in Hindi/Urdu, so English language learners will often replace it with a *v* sound. Also, the *th* sound does not exist, so English language learners will often replace it with a *t* or *d* sound.

Hindi/Urdu grammar is more complicated than English grammar. Nouns are male or female and adjectives have to agree with them. Verb declination is more complicated as well. However, unlike English, there are few exceptions to the grammar rules. Reading, too, follows the rules and is totally phonetic.

There is a major difference in syntax between Hindi/Urdu and English. In English the word order is usually subject–verb–object; in Hindi/Urdu it is subject–object–verb. Also, in Hindi/Urdu nouns are not preceded by articles, so Hindi/Urdu speakers must learn when to use “a” and when to use “the” when learning English.

Southern Indian languages come from the Dravidian language family: Tamil, Malayalam, Telegu and Kannada. Each of these languages has a rich literature, both ancient and modern. They are all represented in newspapers with large circulations, on radio and television programs and in film.

English is also a major language, spoken by 125 million Indians, mostly as a second or third language. With a circulation of 3,000,000, *The Times of India* has the largest circulation of all English language newspapers in the world. English is the language

of higher education and many outstanding Indian authors write in English.

A creole of English and Hindi, sometimes known as Hinglish, is growing in popularity. Long spoken by the elite, it is now also being used on radio, TV and in films.

The first language of most people from Punjab is Punjabi. Punjabi is also the language of the people of the province of Punjab in Pakistan. In India, Punjabi is usually written in Gurmukhi script. Punjabi is the most common language of current immigrants to Canada.



# Indian Schools

There are several key differences between Indian schools and Canadian schools. These differences may affect how teachers work with Indian immigrant students.

Indian schools are more hierarchical and formal. In most schools students stand up when a teacher enters the room. Teachers are usually addressed as sir or madam, never by their first name. Even in the staff room, teachers address each other as Mr, Ms, Mrs or Miss. Because of this formality, some immigrant students may be hesitant to approach their teacher with problems or questions.

Teaching methodologies usually emphasize rote learning and developing reading and writing skills as opposed to the problem-solving and critical thinking skills that we try to focus on in Canada. Group work is rarely used. Testing is usually at mid-year and at the end of the year. Exam questions are usually long answer, not multiple choice. Therefore, immigrant students may underperform initially until they adjust to our methodology and understand what we expect of them.

Currently educational leaders are promoting more progressive methodologies; however, the task of implementing educational change to more than nine million teachers in a million schools through 22 official languages is huge. This is complicated by a lack of resources and the need to focus on other critical issues, like promoting literacy and girls' education.

At a higher, secondary level in most Indian schools students have limited choices. They must choose among science, arts/humanities or commerce programs.

Within these programs, almost all courses are fixed. Immigrant parents and students may initially struggle to understand terms like *core subjects* and *options*.

Indian parents are very involved in supervising homework and exam preparation, more so than many Canadian parents. However, in most schools there is nothing like a parent council, and parents are rarely asked to volunteer in the classroom. Parents generally do not visit their child's classroom, and if they concerned about their child's performance, they would usually speak to the principal first, not the teacher. Schools do have periodic parent-teacher meetings and a few schools involve parents in a school management committee, but otherwise parental involvement in the school is low.

Special education services are not as accessible in India as they are in Canada. Parents may initially be hesitant to approve of special education services, out of a concern that a stigma may become attached to their child.

The initiation of sex education in Indian schools has been controversial. Some parents fear it will promote promiscuity. In many parts of the country it is not offered at all. Teachers may need to invite immigrant parents to the school to explain, with a translator if needed, the goals and content of the Alberta program.

Many Indian schools are single gender. Even at coed schools, girls and boys do not interact with each other as freely as they do in Canada. Therefore, grouping new immigrant boys or girls with other students for coed classroom should be done with care.

There is a great deal of variation among Indian schools. Most urban students attend private English

medium schools. Fees vary considerably, from a few hundred to several thousand dollars per year, as does the quality of instruction. Although most schools serve students from the same socioeconomic backgrounds, the recent Right to Education law has made it mandatory for schools to enroll 25 percent of their students from economically weaker sections of society.

Some private schools are called “international schools,” and they teach an American or British curriculum, while others are referred to as “public” schools, and those are modelled after British public schools. Some are run by religious organizations, some

by charitable trusts and some by entrepreneurs for profit. The state government provides aid to supplement parent tuition at some private schools.

As in Canada, K–12 education is a state responsibility. The central (federal) government operates schools for children of government employees and the military. In rural communities there is also great variation. In some government schools, teacher absenteeism is a major problem. Initially immigrant parents may be challenged to understand the culture of the Canadian public school systems, and they may appreciate the professionalism of Canadian teachers.



# Indian Immigration to Canada



Immigration to Canada started in the early 1900s, with mostly Sikhs coming to British Columbia to work in forestry and agriculture. Immigration of non-Europeans, however, was severely limited by the Government of Canada until 1967. Since then there has been a steady flow of Indians, coming first for economic opportunity and later for family unification. Most have come to Canada directly from India, but many have come from different regions of the Indian diaspora, including Fiji, the Middle East, the Caribbean, the USA, the UK and Africa. Many who came from Africa were pushed out for political and economic reasons. Of the Indian immigrants in Alberta, many have spent some time living in Toronto or Vancouver before settling here.

In 2016, of the 7.5 million immigrants in Canada, 670, 000 were from India, making India the largest source country. Indo-Canadians now play leading roles in the professions, academia, business and government. Sikhs have been very successful in politics.

Immigrants from India face numerous challenges. The first, but usually not the biggest, is the weather. Nowhere in India do temperatures go below four degrees centigrade on the coldest night of the year. Alberta winters often shock new immigrants, and some parents will keep their children home from school and certainly indoors out of fear for their health.

After weather, finding employment may also be a major challenge. Though one may be fully qualified in a profession in India, it may be difficult or impossible to find a job in one's field in Canada. Foreign credentials



WIKIPEDIA

and foreign experience are often not recognized, and repeated rejection in the job market and unemployment are very hard on one's self-esteem and spirits.

The generation gap that we all face in this fast-changing world is magnified by an intercultural gap for immigrant children. School children pick up Canadian culture—norms, values, language—faster than their parents do. This creates tensions in the home. This problem is even more complicated if the children have to translate for their parents because the children become the authority.

For some immigrants, the hardest challenge is living without the family support they had in India. Often grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings are very involved in family decision making and child rearing. If immigrants have left those support people in India and now face the many challenges of adjusting to life in Canada alone, it is difficult.

Fortunately, there are community organizations, government agencies and, hopefully, responsive schools to assist. See the appendix on page 35 for a list.

# Promoting the Success of Indo-Canadian Students

## What can teachers do?

### Welcome students by learning some of their language.

Welcome your immigrant students by first learning to pronounce their names correctly. After they teach you how to say their names, ask them to teach you a few words of their mother tongue. Perhaps start with greetings such as *hi* and *how are you?* After you have learned these, you may choose another sentence to learn, for example, *What's your name?* or *I'm happy to see you.* Learning some of their language will show respect for their culture. It will also encourage them in their language development because they will see that you understand how difficult it is to learn a new language.

### Learn about your students' backgrounds and cultures.

You have started by using this resource booklet. Now continue by reading Indian novels—there is a list in the appendix (p 35). Watch Indian films, which are available on Netflix and YouTube, from both public and ATA libraries, and in movie theatres. Listen to Indian music and take in a dance performance. Visit a house of worship—a gurdwara, a mandir or a mosque. Learn from your students and their parents. Learn from your Indo-Canadian colleagues at school and at teachers' conventions. Try an Indian restaurant. Enjoy!

As we have shown in this booklet, India is a country of great diversity. Find out where your students are from and how they got here. What is important to them? What do they do after school? What sports do they like? What music? Who is in their families? Are their grandparents here? Are they planning a trip home?

### Give students the opportunity to explore their culture and share it with their classmates.

Make assignments that provide your students an opportunity to write about, talk about and share their Indian experience.

- Have them write about or report on
  - a holiday celebration, a relative's wedding or their journey to Canada;
  - what they like about Canada;
  - what they would like people to know about life in India (could be as specific as what to wear or not wear to a wedding or as general as what people eat for breakfast, lunch or dinner);
  - what surprised them most about life in Canada;
  - the view from the window in their home in Canada compared to the view from their home in India;
  - a word in their mother tongue that can't be translated (for more advanced students).
- Invite them to demonstrate an Indian dance.
- Where appropriate, incorporate Indian art, music, dance, history, social studies or literature into your instructional program.

- Encourage them to read books about India. You will find a list of story books at [imaginationsoup.net/childrens-books-india-indian-culture-mythology/](http://imaginationsoup.net/childrens-books-india-indian-culture-mythology/). Also, the children's section in your public library will have books, especially in Edmonton and Calgary.
- Invite parents or community members to the class to talk about a holiday or to serve Indian snacks.
- Take your class on a walking field trip to an Indian grocery store, a mosque, a gurdwara or a temple.
- Ask students to research and report on a prominent Indo-Canadian. A list that can serve as a good starting point is available at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Indo-Canadians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indo-Canadians). Also, Calgary Immigrant Services ([immigrantservicescalgary.ca/ida](http://immigrantservicescalgary.ca/ida)) annually presents Immigrants of Distinction awards.
- At a more complex level, suggest a student write a paper comparing and contrasting how India and Canada are dealing with social problems, such as protecting women's rights or racism.

These lessons will honour your students and their culture.



YUET CHAN

### Promote class solidarity.

Help the rest of the class understand what it feels like to be new or different. Tell a story of your own experience, for example, your first day at university, taking a dance class or your first day teaching. Ask all students to write or talk about a time when they moved

to a new city or a new school, or when they went to a place where they did not know anybody. Read stories about children moving. Bring community members in to speak about their immigrant experience. Provide opportunities for immigrant students to share their experiences, if and when they are comfortable doing so.

Organize your classroom to assist immigrant students' integration. Assign each new immigrant student a buddy. Carefully group immigrant students so that they have the support of Indian immigrants (if there are any) while they are making friends with non-Indian immigrants.

### Be sensitive to language issues.

Don't assume that immigrant students understand you just because they know English. Differences between Canadian English and Indian English in terms of accent, pronunciation and vocabulary can interfere with communication. Speak slowly and clearly, in the beginning using simple language structures; use visual aids, use your hands, repeat and rephrase. When they know enough to do so, have students tell you what they are expected to do or what the directions are. When needed, use a translating phone app or ask bilingual classmates to translate for you. This booklet does not include ELL strategies, but the ATA library has extensive resources.

### Help students stay grounded in their identity—become bilingual and bicultural.

Encourage students to continue developing their Indian language skills while learning English. Students who have strong skills in their first language develop English skills more easily. The Calgary and Edmonton public libraries have books in Indian languages.

Be aware of the emotional stress some students may be under as they attempt to meet the values and expectations that their parents brought from India and the pressures of fitting in with their Canadian peers. They are becoming not only bilingual, but bicultural. In addition, immigrant students and parents are dealing with the stresses of a major move. Any move is stressful; a cross-cultural move is doubly so. If possible, be available to children as they work through these challenges or make appropriate referrals.

Pay attention to each student's special needs. Hindu students probably won't eat beef and may be vegetarian. Muslim students won't eat pork and may



require halal meat. Muslim students may fast all day during Ramadan. Avoid exams on days when students are absent for religious holidays. Be aware that some parents may take their children out of school for many weeks to go home for a wedding or some other family event.

### **Be sensitive to incidents of racism and bullying.**

Be aware of your own prejudices and help students to be aware of theirs so that they can try to prevent hurting others. Teach them to be sensitive to racist incidents and to call them to the attention of a parent, teacher or administrator. If an incident is reported, be sure somebody is helping the student involved. Be aware that your immigrant students as well as your Canadian-born students have prejudices. The resources offered by the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities at <http://safeandcaring.ca/resources/> may be helpful.

### **Reach out to immigrant parents.**

Parents of immigrant students may be dealing with one or many personal stressors: establishing a new home, requalifying themselves in their professions, finding or dealing with a new job, dealing with debt taken on to make the move, and loneliness due to living without their family support system. In addition, their children may be experiencing the stress of a new school with an unfamiliar system and expectations in addition to their own loneliness. Here are some things we can do so that school is a support, not an additional stressor:

- Create a welcoming atmosphere and make parents feel that their involvement is valued.
- Provide adequate time for parent–teacher conferences.
- When needed, find translating support to facilitate parent–teacher communications.
- Organize programs that engage parents in a dialogue with teachers about school education.



YUET CHAN

# Parents Orientation Guide

This guide was originally developed for *Working with South Sudanese Immigrant Students—Teacher Resources*, written by Athieng Riak, Abiel Kon, Maryanne MacDonald, Elaine Lou, Lynn Smarsh and Pam Young. It has been adapted for use in this booklet.

## School/Home Communication

### Parent–Teacher Interview



- Parents and teachers are partners in a child’s education.
- An interview is a chance to discuss your child’s progress in school.
- The school can provide a translator, or you can bring someone you trust to interpret for you.
- An interview is usually 15 minutes long.

### School Fees



- Parents need to pay for bus fees, textbooks and other learning supplies.
- If you can’t afford to pay these fees, you can talk to the school, and your child can still go to school.
- You may not have to pay all the fees if you have money problems.

## Homework



- Students use an agenda to write down their homework. Please check the agenda to see their assignments.
- If you can't help your child with homework, check to see if the school has a homework club.

## Letter/Phone Call from School



You might hear from the school when

- there are important forms for you to sign;
- they have concerns about your child;
- your child is absent from school, and the office hasn't heard from you.

## Delivery of Learning

### Textbooks



- Students don't always get a textbook for every subject.
- Students keep assigned textbooks for the school year.
- They must return textbooks at the end of the year in good condition. If they do not, they will have to pay for the textbook.

### Other Learning Tools



- Students use binders to organize learning materials and carry them into the classroom.
- Students are encouraged to organize their binders regularly.
- While a computer at home is very helpful to your child's learning, they don't have to have a personal laptop or other devices such as a tablet or cell phone.



## Teaching Styles



- Students do not just memorize facts.
- Teachers encourage creative thinking and questions.
- Students often work in groups to complete assignments and projects.
- Boys and girls work together and are treated equally.

## English Language Learning (ELL)



- ELL students need up to seven years to become academically successful in English.
- Students may access additional, free ESL help outside of school in a public library or community church.

## Parenting in Canada

### Family Time



- Canadians value family time.
- Families often have dinner together.
- Parents spend time doing activities with their children, at home and in the community.

### Discipline at Home



- Physical punishment is illegal at school and at home.
- Parents set limits at home, and children have to take responsibility for their mistakes.

## Family Responsibilities



- Children are encouraged to share family chores such as cleaning up rooms, lawn mowing and snow shoveling.
- It's illegal to keep children at home to babysit younger siblings on school days.

## Traditional versus Canadian



- Canada is proud of its cultural diversity.
- As a family, you can keep some important family traditions and learn some new Canadian ways.
- Successful immigrant children embrace both their old and new cultures' norms and values.

## Gender Expectations

### Recreation



- Both girls and boys have options to play all sports or take up any hobby. Boys and girls participate together.
- Team sports require separation of boys and girls as they get older. Boys' size and strength requires this for safety.

### Careers



- Girls and boys are encouraged to take up careers. This means delaying marriage.
- Careers are for both boys and girls.
- Both men and women hold positions of authority.
- Presently, more girls than boys attend postsecondary schools to advance their education.

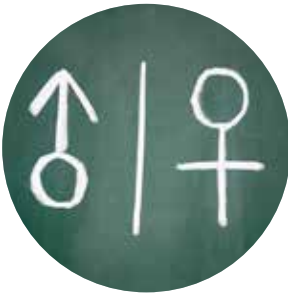


## Academic Success for Boys and Girls



- Girls and boys are encouraged to stay in school and to achieve the highest level of education possible.
- Academic success, as well as homemaking and child-raising skills, are important for both girls and boys.

## Washrooms/Change Rooms



- Girls and boys should use their own washrooms and change rooms.
- Most public washrooms and change rooms will be marked with a sign or picture that shows a man or a woman.

## School Discipline—It's the Law

### Attendance



- Girls and boys must attend school daily until they are 16 years old.
- School administration must report problems with attendance to a special board.
- Missing school can result in a large fine for the parents for each day missed.
- If your child can't go to school, phone the school.

### Serious Offences



- Fighting, bullying, smoking and skipping school are considered serious issues.
- Repeated or serious problems of this kind may result in the student being suspended from school.

## Illegal Activity



- Drugs are illegal in Canada. Use of alcohol is illegal at school. If your child uses, sells or possesses drugs, the police will be called. Parents will be called to meet with police at school.
- Illegal involvement with gangs (groups of people who move drugs or commit crimes) will be dealt with at the school by a police officer. Parents will be called immediately.
- If a student is breaking the law, they will be suspended and possibly removed from the school.
- If a student is fined, the parent is responsible for paying the fine.

## School Day Routines

### Personal Belongings



- Children carry their books in a backpack.
- Children bring a healthy lunch and snacks to school in their backpack.
- Parents should check the backpack for important papers and homework assignments from school.

### Movement in School



- Grade K–6 students keep their backpacks and coats in a coatroom in the classroom.
- Grade K–6 students stay in one room most of the day.
- Grade 7–12 students have lockers for their belongings.
- Students go from room to room for different classes. Teachers usually stay in one classroom.

### Prepare for Class



- Students are responsible for getting to each class on time.
- Children come to school before school starts.
- Students must come to class with their books and homework ready.
- If students don't understand something, they should ask the teacher for help. Teachers want them to ask questions.



## Homework Is Daily



- Your child should do homework every day. They should work on large assignments over a few days or sometimes weeks.
- Not all homework is for marks. If there is no assigned homework, your child should review notes or read.

## School Time Table



- From Grade 7 on, when school begins, you will get a schedule that your child must follow.
- The schedule tells what time each class starts and where classrooms are. Teachers help students to understand the schedule.

## Questions to Ask Your Child At the End of a School Day



- What happened at school today?
- Did your teacher give you a paper for me?
- What did you like best today?
- Did you have fun?
- What do you have for homework?

## Going To Bed and Waking Up



- Your child should use a clock, not the sun, to know when to go to bed and get up.
- Sometimes, schools might be closed or school buses might not run if the weather is bad. Listen for the morning weather report on the radio or TV.



## Health



- If your child has a fever or a disease that other students could catch, like measles or chicken pox, keep the child at home.
- Take your child to the dentist every six months.
- Have your child's eyes tested every year.
- Take your child to the doctor for a check-up every year.

## School Programs

### Helping Children



- There are programs in schools and communities to help young children get ready for kindergarten.
- If children have not been able to go to school in their countries, there are literacy classes to help them fill the gaps in their education.

### Special Programming



- If a student does not achieve well in Grades 1–5, special programming is available to assist the student in catching up and succeeding.
- If the school asks for special programming for your child, you should ask why. The purpose is to help your child catch up.
- If special testing is required, you will be asked to sign consent forms. The testing is necessary and will assist the school in correctly assessing your child.

### Provincial Tests



- In Alberta, provincial tests take place in the spring of Grades 6, 9 and 12.
- The Grade 9 test marks help decide the student's high school courses.
- The Grade 12 test marks are used for college entrance.
- Marks of 75 per cent or higher mean that your child has more academic options.



## Promotions



- Each year a student progresses from grade to grade.
- Teachers look at report cards and provincial tests to make course plans with you and your child.

## Assessment

### Types of assessment



- Written assessments (writing assignments and exams)
- Oral assessments
- Group work
- Presentations
- Peer assessments (student assess each other)
- Self-evaluations (students assess their own work)

### Expectations



- Students are not ranked in the classroom. Teachers do not compare children in the classroom.
- Teachers ask students to achieve to the best of their ability and a little beyond.

### What is taught



- All of Alberta has a standard curriculum. It is completed in 12 years of school.
- All children are expected to take English, social studies, sciences, mathematics, physical education and optional courses.
- Children are expected to be competent at the level of the curriculum for each year.

## Reporting



- You will receive report cards several times each year. They have marks and comments from the teacher about your child. If you have questions, contact the school.
- Talk to your child about the report card. Then sign it and send it back to the school if your school requires this.
- At the end of June, you will receive a copy of the final report card.

## Graduation

### Aim High



- In senior high school, each course is worth credits. Graduating students must have at least 100 credits. This means they must take 25–30 courses over three years.
- Courses include English, social studies, sciences, math, physical education, career and life management, and options.

### College and University



- Students can complete the high school diploma requirements at high school or as adults at a community college.
- Students need at least a 70 per cent average in five academic subjects for college entrance.
- English 30.1 is used as one of the entrance requirements to many college programs.



## Paying for College and University



- College and university fees cost several thousand dollars per year. Textbooks and other materials are also very expensive.
- Students can work part-time and go to school part-time. Students can also apply for scholarships and loans to help cover tuition fees.

## Careers



- In Canada, all careers are valued. Trades courses and professional courses are studied at college.
- Trades certificates are often earned on the job.
- Professionals in the trades are well-respected and well-paid.

# Appendix—Resources

---

## Films

---

### ***Bend it like Beckham***

Set in London, this 2002 romantic comedy focuses on a soccer-loving 18-year-old girl who, despite her Punjabi parents' opposition, is determined to play professional soccer one day. She secretly joins a local women's team that eventually leads her to win a soccer scholarship to a major American university, challenging her parents' cultural values and conservative plans for her future in the process.

### ***Bhaji on the Beach***

A 1993 British comedy-drama which portrays sociocultural and race relations in Britain. A diverse group of Punjabi women of different generations visit an annual autumn light festival in Blackpool. As they make their way through their vacation day, their entertainment activities are interspersed with flashbacks to the realities of their daily lives, where issues such as family violence, intolerance and racism are explored.

### ***Earth***

Concentrating on one family's experiences, this 1998 period film portrays events before and after the partition of India in 1947, and the subsequent creation of Pakistan. It examines the sometimes tragic personal consequences of this monumental event in India's history. Directed by Indo-Canadian Deepa Mehta.

### ***Gandhi***

A 1982 biographical film about the life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, beginning in 1892, when he was thrown out of a whites-only compartment of a South African train, and concluding with his assassination in 1948. It provides a great deal of information about India's struggle for independence from Britain.

### ***The Lunchbox***

A mix-up by Mumbai's lunchbox delivery system accidentally connects a young housewife to a widowed accountant soon set to retire. They build a romantic connection by exchanging notes with each other using lunchbox deliveries. Released in 2013.

### ***Monsoon Wedding***

The film depicts the romantic entanglements and emotional baggage of extended family who gather to celebrate a traditional Punjabi Hindu wedding in modern Delhi. A delightful comedy released in 2001.

### ***The Namesake***

Based on the novel by Indo-American author Jhumpa Lahiri, this 2007 film depicts the struggles of Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli, first-generation immigrants from the state of West Bengal to the United States, and their American-born children Gogol and Sonia. The film takes place primarily in Kolkata (Calcutta) and New York.

## **Rang De Basanti**

The 2006 story of five Indian men in modern-day Delhi who assist an English woman in filming a documentary that tells the story of five revolutionary Indian freedom fighters from the 1930s. Inspired by the original revolutionaries, the five men become fighters against injustice themselves, and in the process relive the historical events chronicled by the documentary.

## **Salaam Bombay**

A 1988 drama depicting the lives of street children in a Bombay slum. It is powerful, tender, upsetting and hopeful. Most of the actors who depicted the children in the film were actual street kids who had been given dramatic training. After the film was released, a trust fund was set up to help them get off the streets.

## **Slumdog Millionaire**

In Bombay, a young man from a poor background is able to correctly answer every question of the quiz show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* by recalling incidents in his life. Although criticized for its misleading depiction of poverty and Indian society, it won best picture at the 81st Academy Awards in 2008.

## **Water**

Set in 1938, this 2005 Deep Mehta film tells the story of Chuyia, an eight-year-old widow confined to an ashram by her parents because her future husband has died. The film portrays the inhumane treatment of widows in the ashram and explores themes of misogyny and the marginalization of women. Because of strong opposition by Hindu fundamentalists, filming was moved from India to Sri Lanka.

More films are available at your public library, local cinemas and Netflix. Almost all will have English subtitles.

## **Literature**

*A Suitable Boy*, by Vikram Seth, is set in a newly independent India and follows the story of four families over a period of 18 months. It centres on one character's efforts to arrange the marriage of her younger daughter to a suitable boy. By exploring the stories of four families in depth and tying them together, the novel provides a deep understanding of Indian family

life. Though very long—one of the longest novels ever published in English—it is well worth reading.

*The Book of Secrets*, by M. G. Vassanji, tells the life histories of several South Asian families over a period of seven decades. The novel concentrates on the experiences of men who left western India to live in East Africa and on a diary that holds what one character believes are secrets relating to the paternity of his son. A Toronto resident, Vassanji grew up in Kenya and Tanzania. He has won several awards including a Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the very first Giller Prize for Canadian fiction in 1994.

*The Financial Expert*, by R. K. Narayan, is about life in the fictional small town of Malgudi in southern India. It recounts the life of a poor man who spends his time under a tree giving financial advice to anyone who will pay him. A rags-to-riches story that explores the clash between the modern world and ancient traditions. Narayan's books are charming and light, written with humour, elegance and simplicity.

*The God of Small Things*, by Arundhati Roy, explores the lives of fraternal twins between 1969 and 1993 and how small things can have significant effects on people's behaviour and lives. It won the Booker Prize in 1997.

*The Hero's Walk*, by Anita Rau Badami, centres around a middle-aged family man whose troubles peak when he embarks on a life-altering journey to bring his recently orphaned granddaughter to Canada. Badami is graduate of the University of Calgary. The book won a Commonwealth Writers' prize in 2001.

*Midnight's Children*, by Salman Rushdie, is narrated by a protagonist who is born at midnight and at the exact moment that India becomes an independent country. It is later revealed that all children born at this time have special powers, and the narrator himself is telepathic. Written in a magic realism style, the novel is considered a loose allegory for the period before and after the independence and partition of India. A Booker Prize winner in 1981.

*Milk and Honey*, by Rupi Kaur, is a book of poetry about love, pain and passion through the eyes of a young Sikh-Canadian woman. This work is a *New York Times*' best seller and award winner.

*The Namesake*, by Jhumpa Lahiri, chronicles the struggles of a Bengali couple who migrate to the US and their internal battles to find a balance between American

and Indian cultures. The book can be used in high school classes and has been made into a film.

*Song of the Cuckoo Bird*, by Amulya Malladi, describes the life of Kokila, an 11-year-old orphan who is sent to an ashram. Deliberately going against tradition, Kokila rejects an arranged marriage and decides to spend her life in the ashram, though she regrets this decision later. The novel illustrates the experiences of the women, men and youth whose lives are linked closely with the ashram. Each chapter also highlights pivotal historical events in India beginning in the 1940s.

*Such a Long Journey*, by Rohinton Mistry, takes place in Mumbai in 1971. The novel's main character, Gustad Noble, a member of the Parsi community, is a hard-working and devoted family man who struggles to keep his family out of poverty. The novel follows the events of his life as well as the political turmoil under India's leader at the time, Indira Gandhi. Born in India, Mistry now lives in Canada. This book won him a Governor General's award and Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1991.

*Train to Pakistan*, by Khushwant Singh, is a historical novel published in 1956 about the partition of India in 1947. Set in a fictional village on the border between Pakistan and India, the novel explores the relationships between Sikhs and Muslims and the cultural and social aspects of the violence that erupts in a once peaceful community. Singh was a Sikh journalist, diplomat and politician.

*The Tree Bride*, by Bharati Mukherjee, is the story of Tara Chatterjee, a well-established, affluent, westernized and assimilated US resident. Tara goes in search of her roots, tracing the origins of her family to her ancestral village in Bengal, a planned community in which Hindus and Muslims lived harmoniously, and to a freedom fighter against the British Raj who had been married to a tree as a young girl. Married to Canadian writer Clark Blaise, Mukherjee was the recipient of awards from the *New York Times*, the National Book Critics Circle and others.

*What the Body Remembers*, by Shauna Singh Baldwin, explores the complicated relationships between its three central characters: Roop, (16), the second wife of the considerably older wealthy man, Sardarji, and

Satya, his first wife, who continues to manage Sardarji's farms, businesses and home. It is set amid the tensions among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the late 1930s as India moved towards independence. The book was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2000.

## Teaching Resources Available from the Alberta Teachers' Association Library

<http://library.teachers.ab.ca/Presto/home/ATADefault.aspx>

- Berardo, K, and D K Deardorff. 2012. *Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Brewer, C A, and M McCabe. 2014. *Immigrant and Refugee Students in Canada*. Edmonton, AB: Brush Education Inc.
- Bursztyn, A M, and C Korn-Bursztyn, eds. 2015. *Immigrant Children and Youth: Psychological Challenges*. Santa Barbara, Calif: Praeger.
- Campano, G. 2007. *Immigrant Students and Literacy: Reading, Writing and Remembering*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Campos, D, and K Fad. 2014. *Tools for Teaching Writing: Strategies and Interventions for Diverse Learners in Grades 3–8*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Cooper, J E, B B Levin and Y He. 2011. *Developing Critical Cultural Competence: A Guide for 21st Century Educators*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin Press.
- Flaitz, J. 2006. *Understanding Your Refugee and Immigrant Students: An Educational, Cultural and Linguistic Guide*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Hogan-Garcia, M. 2013. *Four Skills of Cultural Diversity Competence: A Process for Understanding and Practice*. Belmont, Calif: Cengage Learning.
- Sadowski, M, and C Suárez-Orozco. 2013. *Portraits of Promise: Voices of Successful Immigrant Students*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Online resource:
- Tong, V M, C Huang and T McIntyre. 2006. *Promoting a Positive Cross-Cultural Identity: A Caring Teacher's Guide to Working with Recent Immigrant Students*. <http://behavioradvisor.com/ImmigrantKidTips.html> (accessed August 14, 2019).

## Indian Houses of Worship

All names, addresses and contact information were accurate at the time of publication.

Consult the Internet for others not on this list.

### Hindu Temples

#### Hindu Society of Alberta

14225 133 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB, Canada T5L 4W3  
780- 451-5130  
[hsa50.ca](http://hsa50.ca)

#### Bhartiya Cultural Society of Alberta

9507 39 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T6E 5T3  
780- 468-2106  
[edmontonmandir.com](http://edmontonmandir.com)

#### Shirdi Sai Baba Mandir (Spiritual Meditation Centre)

51076 Range Road 250 SW  
Leduc County, AB T9G 0B3  
780- 263-0663  
<https://shirdisaibabaedmonton.ca/>

#### Hindu Society of Calgary

2225 24 Avenue NE  
Calgary, AB T2E 8M2  
403- 291-2551  
<https://calgaryhindusociety.com/>

#### Radha Mahdavi Cultural Association (Hindu Temple)

313 4 Street NE  
Calgary, AB T2E 3S3  
403- 265-3302  
<https://iskconcalgary.ca/>

### Sikh Gurdwaras

#### Siri Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara

14211 133 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T5L 4W3  
780- 451-4519

#### Nanaksar Gurdwara

1410 Horsehills Road NW  
Edmonton, AB T5Y 6G6  
780- 472-6335  
This gurdwara is a magnificent structure.

#### Gurdwara Millwoods

2606 Millwoods Road East NW  
Edmonton, AB T6L 5Y3  
780- 450-3844  
<http://gurdwaramillwoods.com/>

#### Karamjot Sikh Society

37 Neville Close  
Red Deer, AB T4P 1T8  
403- 346-1534

#### Sikh Society of Calgary

739 81 Street SW  
Calgary, AB T3H 4C6  
403- 246-1776  
<https://sikhsocietyofcalgary.org/>

#### Gurdwara Darbar Sri Guru Granth Sahib JI Calgary

24, 3710 Westwinds Drive NE  
Calgary, AB T3J 5H3  
403- 351-3822  
<http://darbarsahibcalgary.com/>

#### Brahm Bunga Spiritual Fellowship Calgary

9350 17 Avenue SE  
Calgary, AB T1X 1G5  
403- 765-4321

#### Dashmesh Cultural Centre

135 Martindale Boulevard NE  
Calgary, AB T3J 2X5  
403- 590-0970  
<http://dashmesh.ca/>

#### Guru Ram Das Darbar

5225 84th Street NE  
Calgary, AB T3J 4A9  
403- 285-3035  
<http://gururamdasdarbar.com/>

### Jain Temple

#### Jain Society of Alberta

14225 133 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB, T5L 4W3  
780- 435-9070

### Mosques and Islamic Centres

Mosques all over Alberta can be found by searching the Internet.

#### Muslim Council of Calgary

225 28 Street SE  
Calgary, AB T2A 5K4  
403- 219-0991  
<https://yycmuslims.ca/>

#### Canadian Islamic Centre/Al Rashid Mosque

13070 113 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5E 5A8  
780- 451-6694  
[alrashidmosque.ca](http://alrashidmosque.ca)



## Community Organizations

### Indo-Canadian Women's Association

9342 34 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T6E 5X8  
780- 490-0477

[icwaedmonton.org](http://icwaedmonton.org)

### India Canada Association Calgary

826 Edmonton Trail NE  
Calgary, AB T2E 3J6  
403- 277-0206

### Alberta Network of Immigrant Women

107, 1409 Edmonton Trail NE  
Calgary, AB T2E 3K8  
403- 262 8040 ext40

<https://.aniw.org/>

## Shops

You can experience a quick trip to India by visiting an Indian shopping area. Go smell the spices in an Indian grocery store; check out a jeweller or a sari shop. Leave time for lunch or dinner at a nearby Indian restaurant.

In Edmonton there are Indian shops and restaurants all over the city. The greatest concentration, however, is in the neighbourhood of Millwoods. There are strip malls of Indian shops on 34th avenue between Gateway Boulevard and 91st street.

In Calgary there are Indian shops and restaurants all over the city. The greatest concentration is in the northeast neighbourhoods of Temple, Whitehorn, Falconridge, Castleridge, Rundle, Martindale, Taradale and Saddleridge.

## Restaurants

There are many Indian restaurants in Alberta. Almost all that the author has eaten at are good. Some serve an economical buffet. All Indian food is “spicy” meaning, simply, cooked with many spices. Indian food is not necessarily “hot” however. If that is an issue, discuss it with your server.

Most restaurants in Alberta serve the cuisine of northern India. Some serve southern Indian food, and are so identified on the Internet.

## Alberta Immigrant Service Organizations

### Brooks

#### Brooks and County Immigration Services

2, 500 Cassils Road East  
Brooks, AB T1R 1M6  
403-362-0404

<http://bcis-brooks.ca/>

### Calgary

#### Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies

915 33 Street NE  
Calgary, AB T2A 6T2  
403-273-2962

<https://aaisa.ca/>

#### Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth

620, 5920 Macleod Trail SW  
Calgary, AB T2H 0K2  
403-230-7745

<https://cbfy.ca/>

#### Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

5th floor, 1111 11 Avenue SW  
Calgary, AB T2R 0G5  
403-262-2006

<https://ccisab.ca/>

#### Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

200, 138 4 Avenue SE  
Calgary, AB T2G 4Z6  
403-263-4414

<https://ciwa-online.com/>

#### Centre for Newcomers

1010, 999 36 Street NE  
Calgary, AB T2A 7X6  
403-569-3325

<https://centrefornewcomers.ca/>

#### Immigrant Services Calgary

12th floor, 910 7 Avenue SW  
Calgary, AB T2P 3N8  
403-265-1120

<https://immigrantservicescalgary.ca/>

## Edmonton

### **ASSIST Community Services Centre**

9649 105A Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5H 0M3  
780-429-3111  
<http://assistcsc.org/en/>

Southwest location  
2, 810 Saddleback Road  
Edmonton, AB T6J 4W4  
780-429-3119

### **Catholic Social Services Immigrant and Settlement Services**

8212 118 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5B 0S3  
780-424-3545  
<https://cssalberta.ca/>

### **Changing Together—A Centre for Immigrant Women**

McCauley School Building  
3rd floor, 9538 107 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T5H 0T7  
780-421-0175  
<http://changingtogether.com/>

### **Edmonton Immigrant Services Association (EISA)**

201, 10720 113 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5H 3H8  
780-474-8445  
<http://eisa-edmonton.org/>

### **Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN)**

11713 82 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5B 2V9  
780-424-7709  
<https://emcn.ab.ca/>

### **Islamic Family and Social Services Association (IFSSA)**

South office  
85, 4003 98 Street  
Edmonton, AB T6E 6M8  
780-430-9220  
North office  
12811 58 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5A 4X1  
780-430-9220  
<https://ifssa.ca/>

### **Multicultural Health Brokers Coop**

9538 107 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5H 0T7  
780-423-1973  
<http://mchb.org/>

### **EMCN at Welcome Centre for Immigrants**

Millbourne Market Mall  
7609 38 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T6K 3Y7  
780-462-6924  
<http://emcn.ab.ca/>

## Fort McMurray

### **YMCA of Wood Buffalo—Immigrant Settlement Services**

106B, 9816 Hardin Street  
Fort McMurray, AB T9H 4K3  
780-743-2970

## Grande Prairie

### **Grande Prairie Centre for Newcomers**

Building C, 10116 102 Avenue  
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 1A1  
780-538-2727  
<https://gpvsb.com/membership/spotlights/540-centre-for-newcomers>

## Lethbridge

### **Lethbridge Family Services—Immigrant Services**

1107 2 Ave A North  
Lethbridge, AB T1H 0E6  
403-320-1589  
[https://lfsfamily.ca/immigrant\\_services/index.php](https://lfsfamily.ca/immigrant_services/index.php)

## Lloydminster

### **Catholic Social Services, Gateway for Newcomers**

6612 35 Street  
Lloydminster, AB T9V 3H1  
780-875-9084  
<https://cssalberta.ca/Our-Services/Immigrant-Refugee-Support/Gateway-for-Newcomers>

## Medicine Hat

### **Saamis Immigration Services Association**

659 3 Street SE  
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 0H4  
403-504-1188  
<http://saamisimmigration.ca/>

## Red Deer

### **Catholic Social Services—Immigration and Settlement**

202, 5000 Gaetz Avenue  
Red Deer, AB T4N 6C2  
403-346-8818



