

May 27, 2014

Komagata Maru (1914-2014)

Last Friday, Trustee Hayes and I, had the privilege of attending the Komagata Maru - 100th Anniversary Commemoration Event hosted by SFU Harbour Centre.

It was on May 23rd, 1914 when the Japanese Ship Komagata Maru entered Burrard Inlet carrying 376 passengers, primarily Sikhs and some Hindus and Muslims from the Indian sub-continent who were all British subjects. Upon arrival, the passengers were detained by Canadian Immigration, not granted permission to land, and asked to stay anchored in the harbour. They faced many hardships including lack of food or clean water. They were denied medical attention, communication with their families and proper legal counsel. After two months, the Komagata Maru passengers were forced to return to India where they faced persecution and many were killed upon arrival in India.

The history of this voyage of the Komagata Maru and its passengers has not been forgotten. The resistance of the passengers and their commitment to equality and democracy continues to be inspiring. Their story is not about what happened in 1914, but is part of the long struggle to create a Canada that resists racism and embraces diversity.

As a district we