

## [Narrative of Sukhwinder Bolla]

Saw mill Worker Stories  
Sukhwinder Singh Bolla Narrative  
Interview Date: November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Sukhwinder Singh Bolla was born on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964 in Chokdana village, located in District Nawan Sheher, Punjab, India. He immigrated to Canada on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1984 under the family class back. He came alone sponsored by his family who was here already at the time and today he is a Canadian Citizen. To take the citizenship of Canada each people could do their application after three years. Thus, Sukhwinder applied for his after three and a half years. After that they got a call to test and if they passed their test they became citizens.

Before immigrating to Canada, Sukhwinder Singh worked as farmer in the agricultural industry for five to six years in India. After coming to Canada, he worked in various saw mills. The first mill he worked was in Mission and called the Mission Shake and Shingle. He worked there for approximately fifteen months from 1985. He worked in other mills as well. For example, in 1987, he started working in the Fraser Cedar Shake and Shingle for about one year, which was located in Maple Ridge. When he came from India he used to go to a farm for work. And after work, he learned how to pack the shakes. He used to go as a helper with somebody in a Mill and learn the skill from him. After that, he slowly got a job there. As he was going daily to learn and work as a helper, the mill owner at Mission Shake and Shingle understood that this man had learned and knows the work now and he gave him the job.

Sukhwinder Singh recalls that he started his first job as a packer of shake and shingle. After sometime he felt he should move forward and learned to do the cube work. That was a different job, which was hard but it had higher wages. Slowly, as people were leaving, he started working with cubes. As such, first he was a shingle packer and Shake packer and then after getting a promotion, he became a "Cube Man." There were many people of European origin workers in the mill. For example, Sukhwinder Singh remembers Dave and Mike, the foreman. He worked in other mills too, so there was a difference. After the 1990's Sukhwinder Singh moved into the trucking business in 1991. The name of the mill in Abbotsford where Sukhwinder Singh had worked was the Blue River Shake and Shingle. It was here he did cube work and then he became Cube man.

In 1985, it was considered more socially acceptable to work in a mill as opposed to working in a farm. When people used to say "he works at a Mill" that used to be his name and he was considered to be a great man and he is financially better off. Instead, during that time, Sukhwinder Singh recalls that farmers were only earning a wage of \$3.50 per hour. For example, after he had first arrived in Canada, the next day, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, he worked for the whole day at the farm to pick up sprouts and he was given only 7 dollars or 8 dollars for working 16 hours of picking sprouts. Only one day, he made 16 dollars and

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