The Nishkam Centre: building heritage for future



The Birmingham organisation is using National Lottery funding and 'selfless service' to record stories and support communities.

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Birmingham's Nishkam Civic Association (NCA), fondly known as the Nishkam Centre, draws its values from the Sikh faith. Nishkam means ‘selfless service’, a principle that drives their delivery of community cohesion and wellbeing activities in Handsworth, one of England's most deprived areas.

Recording migration stories

In 2016, the Nishkam Centre was awarded £80,000 of National Lottery funding for their project, ‘The Birmingham & Black Country Sikh Migration Story’. They captured the journeys of the Sikh population to Birmingham and the Black Country, from the first generation to the current day.



Migration stories

Ajit Singh, Contracts Manager at the Nishkam Centre, said of the project: “We were able to record the history of our forefathers’ arrival into Birmingham and the Black Country, and ensure their stories of overcoming discrimination, clash of cultures, achievements, sacrifices, protecting their values and identity and making a positive social, cultural, faith and economic contribution was not lost.”

Preparing for the future

Normally, its free or subsidised services would reach over 35,000 people. But with the onset of coronavirus (COVID-19), for the first time in 15 years, the doors to the Centre were closed. They applied to our Heritage Emergency Fund for help.

The £59,000 National Lottery funding they received helped them to continue supporting communities during lockdown. This pivotal time in contemporary history is also inspiring the Centre to adapt its service, whilst providing stories for future generations to tell.



Nishkam Centre performance

Ajit says,“The coronavirus pandemic will have a long lasting effect on the people and history of the UK. Every crisis offers the opportunity to re-think what and how we deliver services, and we’re glad to have had the support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund to aid our survival and help turn our visions for the future into a reality.

“The funding is a great catalyst for the Centre to strengthen partnerships and collaborations with other like-minded groups, to nurture further connectivity between communities within Birmingham and the Black Country.

“It is helping us to build upon our rich heritage and values for future generations.”



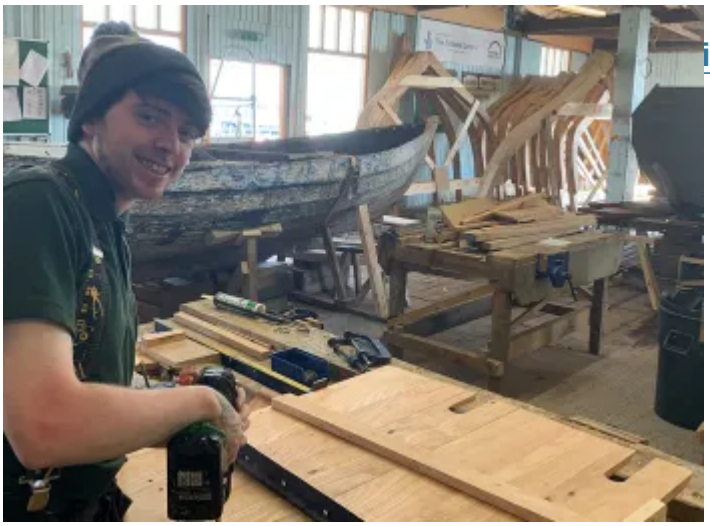
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Cara McCann. Credit: Pacemaker Press



ty, thanks to emergency funding

Brockholes Visitor Village, Lancashire Wildlife Trust Bentham Images



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Trainee Scott Dixon

Blyth Tall Ship kept afloat thanks to National Lottery funding