Major project on Sikhs in the First World War wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

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The project aims to reveal the untold story of the Sikh contribution to the First World War, as part of the one hundred years anniversary of the outbreak of hostilities in 2014. The project will also highlight the wider role played by the ‘non-white’ Commonwealth soldiers in this critical phase of British history.

HLF development funding of £39,400 has been awarded to help UKPHA progress their plans to apply for a full grant of £394,000 next year.

The project will, with community input, create a major exhibition at a prestigious central London gallery, featuring interactive displays and an educational kids' zone as well as a commemorative publication.

Educational packs for schools are also being planned, as is a nationwide programme of outreach events, designed to provide opportunities for members of the public to take part in a number of exciting ways.

In addition, there will be an interactive online project to document Sikh soldiers' and their families' stories. Members of the public will be encouraged to undertake their own research into their and others' family histories to help create the online database, the commemorative publication and exhibition materials.

A major emphasis will be on involving younger people in the project and on involving Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike to explore the remarkable Anglo-Sikh relationship of the last 150 years and how one of modern day Britain's most recognisable minorities came to be a part of the British Empire.

UKPHA Chair, Amandeep Madra, said: "UKPHA is delighted to have received Heritage Lottery Fund support for our ambitious project. Given the major commemorations that will be taking place nationwide in 2014, this seemed like the appropriate time for the Sikh contribution to be recognised in a fitting way."

He continued: "The role of Sikhs in the Great War is a largely unknown but a fascinating part of the story of the Allied war effort and indeed 'the British story'. Sikhs made up a tiny percentage of undivided India and yet at the start of the war contributed some 22% of the British Indian Army. These numbers swelled over the course of the war and Sikhs fought in all the major theatres contested by British forces from the Western Front to the Middle East. UKPHA looks forward to revealing the untold stories of these soldiers and, just as importantly, the families they left behind, and we will be calling on people from all backgrounds to help us in doing so."

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: "We're extremely pleased to give initial support to this project. The Sikh contribution to the First World War is a heritage subject of national and international importance but little understood and this will help to address that. We shall watch the developing plans with interest."

Notes to editors

On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded funding towards the development of the scheme where appropriate.

About UKPHA: The UK Punjabi Heritage Association (UKPHA) is a non-profit voluntary organisation based in London. The association was founded in 2001 to foster a greater appreciation of Punjabi Heritage in Britain and encourage the preservation of endangered items of Punjabi material heritage. For more more information visit the UKPHA website.

UKPHA is a registered partner of the Imperial War Museum's First World War Centenary Project, a network of over 500 local, regional, national and international cultural and educational organisations. Together, they will present a vibrant global programme of cultural events and activities, which will connect current and future generations with the lives, stories and impact of the First World War. More details can be found at the First World War Cetenary website.

Further information

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