



SIKH*lens*

**ANNUAL
ACTIVITIES
REPORT**

2022



SIKHLens is a non-profit (501.3c) organization that was founded over twenty-five years ago in Southern California. Its mission was to increase awareness of Sikhs amongst mainstream Americans by exposing them to our unique heritage. Our goals and objectives have been to change the narrative surrounding Sikhs in the mainstream, a goal we continually work toward. We have created an organization that is self-sustaining with strong contributions from both within and without the Sikh community. SIKHLens' presence is well known, not only by the local community and universities, but also around the United States. Through our many programs, particularly those related to creating and screening Sikh centric films such as **Project S**, **Destination S** and **SIKHLens Digital Voices**, we have been able to promote an awareness of the Sikh community. Post 9/11 SIKHLens inaugurated a film festival to increase the awareness of Sikhs amongst mainstream Americans. For the last ten years the foundation has collaborated extensively with Chapman University. Our first involvement was with the Dodge College of Film and Media Arts.

SIKHLens DESTINATION S

Each year our cameras focus on several countries or regions. The films are filmed with SIKHLens owned equipment (valued at over \$500K) and our professionally trained film crews. This program produces 5-10 film with a broad range of subject matters and allows us to make meaningful films for our community. Currently we are in various stages of production on over twenty films. In the past the program has traveled to various destinations around the world—UK, India, Canada, Africa, Nepal, Malaysia, and various European locations to make Sikh-themed films. This coming year we will be focusing on the UK, Canada, India, Peru, Spain, Switzerland, and Seattle. **Destination S** films that were screened at this year's film festival included **Okra King**, **Art Finds A Way**, **Jitt De Nishan**, **The 51 Percent**, and the **Community Voices** films—**Sarbat Da Bhala**, **Powering the Gurdwaras of Punjab with Solar Energy**, and the **Largest Free Eye Camps in Punjab**.

SIKHLens

PROJECT

SIKHLens

DESTINATION



SIKHLens
Community Voices



CHAPMAN
UNIVERSITY

Dodge College of Film and Media Arts

Through **Project S** undergraduate film students travel abroad to film five to seven Sikh-themed films. **Project S** is a two semester course. The first semester is focused on pre-production and on site filming, and the second semester involves postproduction. The courses are taught by Chapman faculty and provide the students with course credit. It is a unique program—no other university has anything like it. The classes have previously gone to Thailand, Malawi, the UK, and Australia. The last class travelled to France where they made five films. Films tell the stories of the first elected Sikh official in France and a female student activist studies to become the first Sikh prime minister. Past films have included topics such as a spoken word poet, a female wrestler, and a fashion blogger. The films from France were shown at this year's **SikhLens: Sikh Arts and Film Festival** which ran from November 17th through November 20th.



Bicky Singh present Dean Stephen Galloway with a gift from The Singh Twins at SAFF 2022.

SikhLens collaborates with the Chapman Libraries by showcasing our heritage by utilizing their facilities and programs for exhibitions and lectures. Our annual film festival is also the launch of a 120-day Sikh exhibition open to the public at the Leatherby Libraries. This year's exhibit, **Hidden Histories: Pioneer Sikhs in Canada** is on display in a more prominent location on the first floor of the library. Previous exhibits included **The Fabric of Punjab**, the work of the Singh Twins from Liverpool, **Sikh Turban and Identity**, **The Great Wars-Never Forgotten 1984**, **The Last King**, **The Life of Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind** and **The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan**. The Leatherby exhibitions are seen by thousands of students, as well as members of the local community. Books, paintings, artifacts, and historical anecdotes are included in these fascinating exhibits. After their conclusions at the main Chapman campus, the exhibit travels to the School of Pharmacy on the Rinker Campus in Irvine. The exhibits then travel on loan to other institutions before returning to the Library's permanent collection. We are working to expand permanent Sikh collections with books, artifacts, and private and antiquarian collections.

The **Sikhs and Sikhism in America Group Study Room** in the Leatherby Libraries is a permanent room where students can study while surrounded by information, photographs, and important objects that all teach about the Sikh faith and Sikh community in the United States. There is even a display that indicates the gurdwaras in the area and can arrange a visit. This **study room** was a result of the many Sikh initiatives at Chapman. This year those Sikh initiatives were honored by the **CASE Award of Excellence for Diversity and Talent Management** which was presented to the Leatherby Libraries.



Karen Dosanjh speaks to SikhLens patrons about her exhibition and upcoming film, **Hidden Histories: Sikh Pioneers in Canada**.

In addition to our usual activities at the Fish Interfaith Center, in October SikhLens, the Fish Interfaith Center, and Leatherby Libraries sponsored a two-day conference with Wilkinson College of Arts, Sciences & Humanities as a part of their lecture series **Engaging the World on Ethnic Studies**. The first evening of the conference special guests **Manpreet Kalra** and **Vishvajit Singh** spoke to the local Sikh community on **The Sikh Experience in America**. The second day the same speakers addressed the Chapman faculty and student community on **Cultural Appreciation, Appropriation, or Assimilation**. Both audiences were standing room only. Once again, the annual SikhLens Patrons' Dinner was hosted at the Fish Interfaith Center. This year Dr. Gail Stearns, Dean of the Wallace All Faiths Chapel at the Center, was also one of our keynote speakers, along with Simran Jeet Singh. Both had a conversation about their recent books. Also in April, for the first time since the pandemic, Fish Interfaith Center hosted the Chapman University's Vaisakhi Celebration in conjunction with SikhLens. This year the program featured two SikhLens scholars from Pakistan--Salman Alman Khan and Pawan Singh.



Dean Gail Stearns (L) speaks with Manpreet Kalra (M) and Vishvajit Singh (R) at the Sikh Conference.



SikhLens has also sponsored a concert at the Musco Center. Satinder Sartaaaj performed on May 8th to a sold out crowd. We look forward to more events at this amazing venue.

SIKHLENS-IN-A-BOX

In addition to our activities on the Chapman campus, we are replicating our film festival on a smaller scale in other cities such as San Antonio, Davis, Portland, Tampa Bay and locations in England and India. During the pandemic, the festivals were held virtually in Toronto and Seattle. All content from the filmmakers is available to any community to host a similar festival. This year the festivals were back in person and held in New York and Seattle. Festivals are currently being planned for Chandigarh in February and in London in June and Toronto.

SIKHLENS DIGITAL VOICE PROGRAM

Through this program participants get an opportunity to grow their storytelling abilities using digital media. Training online at Khan Academy and with Zoom show participants the process of creating video/film. These are supplemented by physical workshops in California, England, and India for anyone that wants to attend. Currently in its 9th year, it continued virtually through the pandemic. We have trained over 6000 children and parents, and produced over 200 films. The films are screened and discussed to engage the students. The program is managed by SikhLens Scholars.

SIKHLENS COMMUNITY VOICES PROGRAM

Many Sikh organizations do amazing work but have no digital voice. SikhLens selects two-three organizations and produces a film about them. The film provides a vehicle for spreading their missions, recruiting volunteers, fundraising, and securing grants. The three NGOs selected this year are: United Sikh Mission (Silver Lining); Hosiarpur Langar Project (Sarbat Da Bhala); and One Beat Foundation.

SIKHLENS PUBLICATIONS

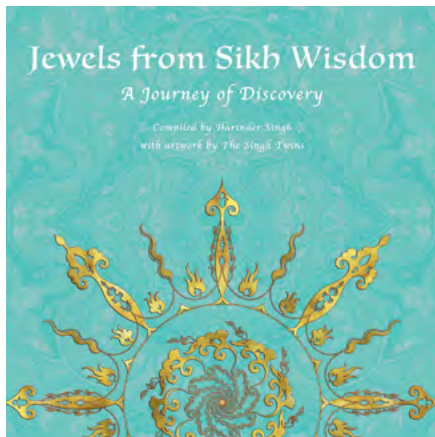
SikhLens Publications began over twenty-three years ago when our first annual **SikhLens Art Calendar** was created. The film festival is the official launch of the calendar each year. Each calendar highlights a particular artist, subject matter, or museum. It projects a historical or heritage focus through photos and artwork. The theme of the 2023 SikhLens Art Calendar is **Hidden Histories: Pioneer Sikhs in Canada**. The calendars are distributed free world-wide. In addition to the calendar SikhLens Publications has also been publishing books. In August, this year **Jewels from Sikh Wisdom: A Journey of Discovery illustrated by The Singh Twins** was released. Books are now available on Kindle.

PROJECT PAKISTAN

Sikhlens is recording and researching the stories and histories of Punjab's Sufis, Saints, Defenders and Sikh Gurus. Current films in production are **Bhai Ram Singh Story** and **Uncommon Journey** (featuring 5 to 6 Muslim scholars and historians working in Sikh faith). Sikhlens is co-producer of **Allegory** (24-episodes), translating from English into Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Shahmukhi. In the past, we have done films like **Knitted Beliefs** and **Going Home**. The **Sikhlens Pakistan Heritage Tour** will be traveling to Pakistan for its third tour in February 2023 where it will explore Sikh heritage and culture. The tour is already completed booked and plans are under way for a fourth tour in 2024.

SIKHLENS SCHOLAR PROGRAM

Sikhlens Scholar Program assists Sikh student filmmakers in their academic journey. We help with counseling and admissions. Sikhlens also encourages younger students through the Sikhlens Digital Voices Program. The program creates an ecosystem of scholars to focus on filmmaking as well as other creative arts. It actively recruits from the Sikh community around the world.



YouTube: youtube.com/sikhlens

Facebook: facebook.com/sikhlens

Twitter: twitter.com/sikhlens

Instagram: instagram.com/sikhlens

Website: www.sikhlens.com

Film Submission: filmfreeway.com/sikhlens