



## Wanjara Nomad Collections Team applauds B.C. government for avoiding “S” word in connection with name of proposed museum

Perspectives

Charlie Smith

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The Wanjara Nomad Collections Team is running #IAMNOTSOUTHASIAN radio ads in Surrey and Edmonton.

A B.C.-based Sikh history group has launched a campaign opposing the term “South Asian”. The **Wanjara Nomad Collections** Team’s radio ads maintain that this phrase “fosters divisions, erodes our sense of identity, and is racist”.

“Instead of uniting, it tends to homogenize our distinct histories and perspectives,” the Wanjara Nomad Collections Team states on its YouTube channel.

The channel includes the message below as part of its **I AM NOT SOUTH ASIAN** campaign.

i am not south asian period



See the **#IAMNOTSOUTHASIAN** message.

The radio ads are being broadcast on Connect FM stations in Surrey and Edmonton.

In addition, the Wanjara Nomad Collections Team has collected **more than 140 video testimonials** from people declaring that they are not South Asian.

Last week, Pancoover **reported** that the B.C. government is **inviting public input** on the purposes, name, and location of a proposed museum honouring the contributions of people who trace their roots back to various Indian states, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other countries in South Asia.

At the time, Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport Minister Lana Popham used the term “Canadians of South Asian heritages” in a videotaped message encouraging public comments.

## First-of-its-kind South Asian Canadian museum to be established



**Watch Lana Popham’s statement regarding the proposed museum.**

Below, Pancouver has posted the Wanjara Nomad Collections Team’s letter to representatives of the B.C. government and the [Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue](#), which is assisting with the consultations. The letter applauds the province for avoiding the “S” word in the museum’s name.

## Read the Wanjara letter

Dear Honored Representatives of the British Columbia Government and the SFU Wosk Centre,

We, the Wanjara Nomad Collections Team (“Wanjara”), appreciate and commend the initiative to establish the History, Tradition, and Culture Museum in British Columbia. It signifies a commendable stride towards inclusivity, civic engagement, and addressing systemic racism.

We acknowledge and applaud the decision by the British Columbia government to avoid using the “S” word in the museum’s name, aligning with our firm stance against its divisive nature. This alignment brings us to a 50% agreement on its interpretation and usage. While optimistic about ongoing dialogue, concerns persist regarding the proposed interim name, “S.A. Museum.”

The proposed title, even as a temporary measure, perpetuates harmful stereotypes and disregards the distinct challenges and achievements of each community within the Canadian mosaic. Alternative names, such as “S.A. Canadian Museum,” or hypothetical titles like “Middle Eastern Museum” for Palestinian-Israeli Canadians or “Soviet Union Museum” for Ukrainian Canadians, risk inadvertently obscuring the unique and complex narratives of each group’s history.

The ‘S’ word is inherently racist, reductive, and repressive, carrying catastrophic implications. Similarly, residential schools are identified by distinct names to acknowledge

their suffering, with careful avoidance of historical, geographical, and religious references. We strongly advocate for a thoughtful approach in naming this museum, to safeguard against perpetuating the echoes of colonial history inherent in the proposed name.

Furthermore, we have observed limited translations in Punjabi, Urdu, and Hindi. While appreciative of this effort, expanding inclusivity to languages from more nations is imperative to prevent any community from feeling overlooked.

Wanjara is dedicated to fostering constructive dialogue and collaboration. We look forward to further discussions, confident that our perspectives will be valued. Together, let us ensure that the museum becomes a true celebration of diversity, accurately representing the rich tapestry of Canadian history and culture.

Warm regards,

Wanjara Nomad Collections Team

## Update from B.C. government

Following publication of this article, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport sent Vancouver the following statement:

“The broad name ‘South Asian Canadian Museum’ is a placeholder until a permanent name is decided. An engagement for a new museum will include input from South Asian Canadians and communities with diverse backgrounds, heritages and ancestral ties to various countries. During the engagement, communities will be able to provide input to the name, location, and vision for this museum. Nothing has been decided yet.

“We are aware that terms like South Asian, like all geographic terms, are imperfect and engagement will help determine what descriptors best reflects the interests of communities.

“The Province is committed to an inclusive, responsive and transparent engagement process that provides space for all points of view, experiences, stories and voices.”



### **Charlie Smith**

Pancouver editor Charlie Smith has worked as a Vancouver journalist in print, radio, and television for more than three decades.