SIKHlens

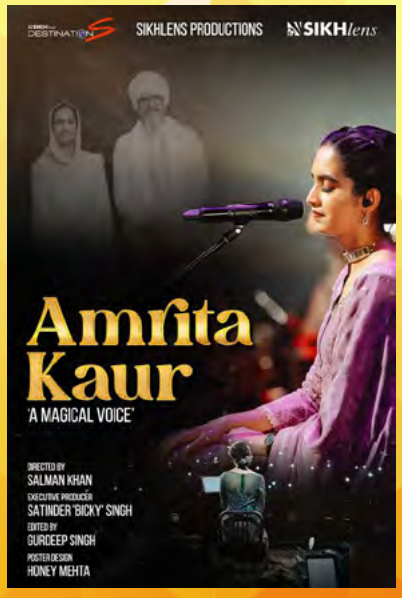
# 2025 ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT

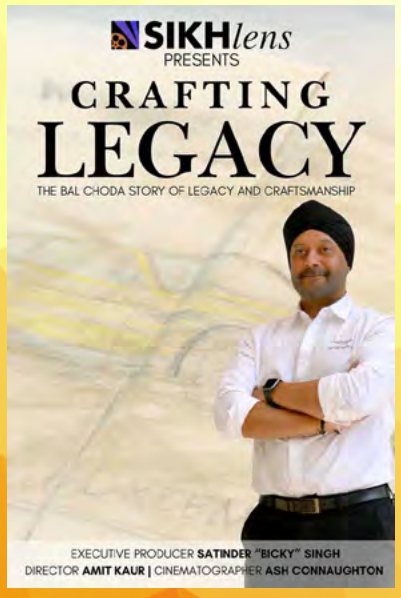
# SIKHlens

Sikhlens is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was established over 26 years ago in Southern California. Its founding mission has been to expand mainstream American awareness and understanding of Sikh cultural heritage. This has been achieved by creating greater exposure to Sikh-related films and media. Over the past quarter century, Sikhlens has evolved into a self-sustaining organization with staunch support from both the Sikh community as well as external contributors. Sikhlens programs that have proven impactful for furthering public awareness include Destination S, Project S, Sikhlens Digital Voices, Sikhlens Community Voices, and Sikhlens Animation. After 9/11 Sikhlens responded by launching a film festival intended to spotlight the Sikh community in order to address the lack of visibility. For the past decade Sikhlens has cultivated extensive collaborations with Chapman University, however due to recent DEI-related funding cuts at Chapman, Sikhlens has begun expanding into community colleges. Our collaboration with Cerritos College is one example.

## SIKHLENS DESTINATION S

Each year the Destination S program focuses filming on select global regions using Sikhlens equipment and crews to produce 10-15 diverse films. Currently over twenty Destination S films are in various production stages. Past destinations have spanned the UK, India, Canada, Africa, Nepal, Malaysia, Peru, and Europe. Destination S films screened at this year's festival included Crafting Legacy, Everyday Activists, and Amrita Kaur: A Magical Voice.



CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

# Dodge College of Film and Media Arts

Dodge College of Film and Media Arts—Through "Project S," Dodge film students travel globally to create Sikh-themed films focused on pre-production and filming, taught by Chapman faculty. Past destinations were Thailand, Malawi, the UK, Australia, France. Chiang Mai, Thailand, Japan and this past summer they traveled to Geneva, Switzerland. This coming summer they will be traveling to Italy.

Behind-the-scenes with Sarah Kirby filming Dr. Jogishwar Singh, featured individual of the film, A Life Story.

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

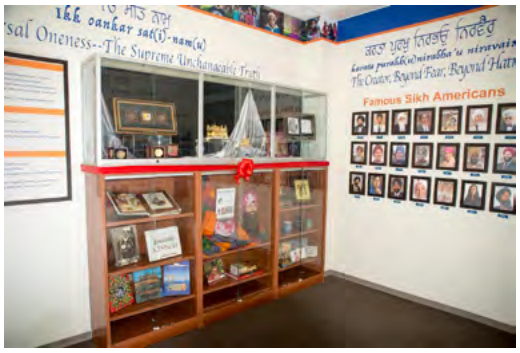
# Fish Interfaith Center

Fish Interfaith Center- In April, Vaisakhi at Fish featured three main presentations. Kiran Kaur Gill, Executive Director of SALDEF, spoke on "Vaisakhi and Sikh Leadership," sharing insights on community advocacy and civic engagement. Chef Inderpal Singh Chawla and Dr. Jasleen Kaur Pannu presented "Heritage, Hospitality, and Healing: A Culinary Journey Beyond the Plate," exploring the intersection of culinary arts, medicine, and cultural identity. The program concluded with a Punjabi song performance by Gurpreet Kaur Phokela, a multidisciplinary artist with expertise in classical music and traditional arts.

Sumita Batra (left) moderated the 2025 Vaisakhi panel with (left-to-right) Gurpreet Phokela, Kiran Kaur Gill, Dr. Jasleen Kaur Pannu and Chef Inderpal Singh Chawla.

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY | **Leatherby Libraries**

The Leatherby Libraries permanently houses the Sikhs and Sikhism in America Study Room where students are surrounded by informative Sikh objects, photos, and resources while studying. Local gurdwaras are displayed with visiting arrangements. This specialized study area resulted from Sikh initiatives at Chapman.



## SIKHLENS: SIKH ARTS AND FILM FESTIVAL

The festival opened Friday, November 21st at The Frida Cinema with our Red Carpet Night hosted by Sumita Batra and Nikki Gill. It featured premieres of "Crafting Legacy," "A Life Story," and "Mitti," with a performance by Gurpreet Phokela and the feature film Maa Jaye. Over 40 shorts screened over the weekend along with sessions on Creative Sikhs, PDV films, and films and a story reading for children. Feature presentations included Chal Mera Putt 4, Akaal: The Unconquered, Mittran Da Challeya Truck Ni, and Sardaar Ji 3.

## SIKHLENS-IN-A-BOX/INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

Beyond our November event, we replicate condensed festivals via our Sikhlens in-a-Box initiative, bringing content to cities like Vancouver, Toronto, Seattle, Chicago, Chandigarh, India and Leicester, UK. Past festivals occurred in New York City, Denver, San Antonio, Davis, Portland, and Tampa. Our model allows any community to host a similar Sikh-focused festival using Sikhlens content. As a result of this program Sikhlens has expanded globally and is now active in Canada, the UK, India, and Pakistan, with Africa launching next year. We have country websites in Canada, the UK, India and Pakistan: sikhlens.ca (live), sikhlens.UK (live), sikhlens.in (in progress), sikhlens.pk (in development). There is ongoing global film and event activities across these regions.

## SIKHLENS DIGITAL VOICE PROGRAM

SIKHlens DIGITAL VOICES

Entering its 12th year, this program grows youth storytelling abilities using digital media. Online Khan Academy training demonstrates fundamentals of video/film creation. Optional in-person workshops are also held in California, England, and India. Over 6,000 children have participated to date, producing over 200 films. The program is managed by Sikhlens Scholars. Select films screened this year at the annual Sikhlens Arts and Film Festival in Southern California.

## SIKHLENS COMMUNITY VOICES PROGRAM

SIKHlens Community Voices

Many Sikh organizations lack a digital presence despite doing impactful work. We produce 3-5 films annually about selected nonprofits to share their mission with potential volunteers, funders, and partners. 2025 films featured Flying High-Falcons Sikh Primary School, I Will Meet You Yet Again: Contemporary Sikh Art, Threads of Life (Randhawa Foundation) and Gift of Light.

## SIKHLENS PUBLICATIONS

SIKHlens PUBLICATIONS

Sikhlens Publications began 24 years ago with the launch of our annual Sikhlens calendar, first introduced at our Sikh Arts and Film Festival. Each calendar spotlights a specific artist, subject, or museum, showcasing historical and cultural heritage through photography and artwork. The 2026 calendar features artwork of the Singh Twins from the UK and is distributed globally at no cost. In addition to calendars, Sikhlens Publications has expanded to include books. Looking ahead to 2026, our forthcoming publications include The Legend of 1972, chronicling Kuldip Singh Bhogal's life and hockey career, and A Quest for Freedom from Suffering, the final book by R.K. Janmeja Singh, Ph.D.

## PROJECT PAKISTAN

November's festival featured Pakistan-based film "Mitti" from Project Pakistan, which previously produced works like "Reviving Roots", "Sparks of Change, "Knitted Beliefs"; "Going Home"; and "Connecting the Dots". Our Sikhlens Pakistan Heritage Tour returns for its expedition in February 2026, exploring heritage and culture.

## SIKHLENS SCHOLAR PROGRAM

We assist Sikh student filmmakers via counseling, admissions support, and encouraging youth through our Digital Voices initiative. This scholar ecosystem focuses on cinema and creative arts, actively recruiting globally.

## SIKHLENS ANIMATION

For more than two decades, Sikhlens has brought Sikh stories to the world through films, books, and art, but animation remained out of reach due to the cost and complexity of traditional 3D production until AI-driven tools changed everything. Over the past year, our team created stunning short films like The Cosmic Drama of Life and Saka Sirhind, proving that world-class animation can be both accessible and affordable, which inspired us to formally launch Sikhlens Animations, a new creative division dedicated to bringing Sikh stories to life for global audiences. Thanks to a recent DVN campaign that raised $105,000, we're now producing 3-5 new AI-assisted short films.

## NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Our UK festival sparked new university partners in England. Vancouver's film festival developed a relationship with the University of British Columbia. Cerritos College will be hosting our annual Vaisakhi program on April 5, 2026.

In April 2025, Sikhlens partnered with SAAHAS for a special screening of the 2024 Oscar-nominated documentary "To Kill a Tiger" at The Frida Cinema.

SIKHlens.com

Donate: www.sikhlens.com/donate

Website: www.sikhlens.com
Facebook: facebook.com/sikhlens
Instagram: instagram.com/sikhlens
WhatsApp: wa.me/17145045264
X aka Twitter: twitter.com/sikhlens
YouTube: youtube.com/sikhlens
Film Submission: filmfreeway.com/sikhlens