

East Meets West:

Vaisakhi Festival Track & Field Meet Will Create a Cultural Fusion

On Saturday April 15th, 8 am to 5 pm, at Rotary Stadium, Abbotsford's own Valley Royals Track & Field Club is hosting an innovative Track Meet infused with spectacular cultural flair. Admission is Free for all spectators. Entry to races and field events is just a \$5.00 Registration Fee for the day. Any member of the general public can participate in one or several events. The Track & Field aspect of the Vaisakhi Festival Meet is woven into an opportunity to experience a first-of-a-kind multicultural community-based healthy initiative to celebrate Vaisakhi together with family, friends and neighbours.

While this meet is sure to attract Track & Field Athletes who typically compete at track meets, people of all ages and abilities are welcome to register and try a variety of events. There are lots of ways to participate in fun non-competitive demonstration events such as: Tug-of-war, Race Walking, family relays, races and throws. Students from school track teams are welcome to register as independent athletes (not representing their school).

Participants and spectators will be part of a learning experience about the true spirit of Vaisakhi Festival Culture and Values. Vaisakhi is an ancient Indian Harvest Festival that will be celebrated as the centerpiece of the Meet. There will be a Cultural Celebration Break in the middle of the day that will include Free Food, Entertainment, Bhangra Dancing, Henna Hand-Painting and Athletic Demonstration Events.

Members of the Sikh Temple will be providing a Free Samosa Lunch, on location, for everyone who attends the Meet as a spectator or participant. As a symbol of the equality of all human beings, the lunch will be served in the traditional way: all participants remove their shoes, cover their heads with a scarf (provided) and are seated on mats on the ground where their meal will be brought to them by servers. Tables and chairs will be available for individuals who are elderly or physically-challenged. Baring of the feet, covering of the head, and sitting on the floor to eat, are all symbols of humble unity and equality where no one is taller than anyone else.

Demonstration Events will include traditional Western Track & Field clinics such as: How to Race Walk, How to Throw Shot Put, and How to use Blocks in Racing. Training will be provided to participants giving them the chance to learn proper technique and then try the Demo Event for fun. Demonstrations Events will also include a showcase of East-Indian Athletic Events such as "Gatka" and "Kabbadi". The martial art of Gatka is a traditional form of combat-training, developed by Sikhs, in which curved wooden sticks are used to simulate swords in sparring matches. Visually-stunning moves of the "Soldiers" include leaps, spins, kicks and sword handling. Kabbadi is a team contact sport that originated in Ancient India that combines the art of wrestling, the strength of rugby and the thrill of tag. The game is played with two teams of 7 players who take turns running across the center line to the other team's half of the court, tagging members of the other team, and running back. The more opposing team members that they can tag, the more points they score. However, if the opposing team can physically prevent them from crossing back to their side of the court, they score no points.

Abbotsford dignitaries will award prizes to Track & Field athletes that place 1st to 8th in each event. Door prizes will be drawn throughout the day for event participants and volunteers. There are many ways to

volunteer at the Vaisakhi Festival Meet to help build this annual event to include the whole Abbotsford community. Interested volunteers should contact Dawn Driver at dawn_driver@hotmail.com to join the Volunteer Team before April 12th. Emails should include details such as: age, phone number, and any special skills such as First Aid or specific experience working at track meets.

This fully-sanctioned track meet will include: Timed Races for all ages, Hurdles, Relays, Shot Put, Long Jump and High Jump. Online Registration is available, until noon on April 12th, via a link on the home page of the Valley Royals Website or by searching the term: "TrackieReg" (click on "Find Event" & select the Green "Register" button beside the Vaisakhi Festival Track & Field Meet). Day of Event entries are also available on site, but registration will close one hour before the start of each event. Registered participants will get a ticket that automatically enters them into a Door Prize Draw.

There will be spaces available at the Meet for Non-Profit Organizations in Abbotsford that wish to put up a table or tent and give out information about their group. Interested Non-Profit Groups can contact Debbie Foote at debbieandabresia@hotmail.com to reserve a promo-space.

The creative vision for this innovative and entertaining Track Meet was the brainchild of Ivon Singh Gill, President of the Valley Royals Track & Field Club. Sponsorship opportunities are still available for this Meet and interested sponsors are encouraged to contact Ivon at ivongill@gilltimbers.com for more information or to select a Sponsorship Level package.

To learn more about this Meet please contact:

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