

# BC LABOUR HERITAGE CENTRE

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Joshua Berson photo

## 20 Totally Awesome Things We Did in 2020

1. Not only did we change the way we work in 2020, we created an archive of BC labour's stories during the **COVID-19 pandemic**. We want future historians to hear - in our own words - what this moment was like. Recorded video interviews, photographs, surveys, archived articles, publications and artifacts will round out the [COVID Chronicles Collection](#).



Far left: Vancouver nurses during the 'Spanish Flu'. *Vancouver Sun* 17 October 1918.

Near left: Tes Estilo, Hospital Employees' Union local officer, Shop Steward and Care Aide at Nicola Lodge in Port Coquitlam. *Photo: Joshua Berson/HEU*

2. The **1918-19 “Spanish Flu”** epidemic was deadly. We dug into historic records to learn how BC labour experienced and responded as we reflected on the COVID-19 pandemic over 100 years later.

3. We assembled an **historical summary** of the “Spanish” Flu of 1918-19 and [posted it for teachers and parents](#) to use in lessons.

4. **Les premières économies** is our first lesson plan to be [translated into French](#) and discusses Indigenous work in the early years of our province.

5. [Our labour history project](#) team has identified more lesson plans and videos for **French-language translation** as a way of improving access to BC labour history for those enrolled in immersion learning. We are seeking funding for this project.

6. [The Day of Mourning for BC Schools Project](#) was quickly transitioned to an online format for 2020. This allowed us to provide tools to **teach students and young workers their rights in the workplace** and reduce the number of deaths and injuries among young workers.



8. We delivered **virtual presentations on BC labour history** and the work of our Centre to a union workshop, an adult education conference and to social studies teachers in a province-wide meeting.

# MRS. KAVANAGH IS VICTIM OF THE FLU

Wife of Vice-President of  
Trades Council Is Laid  
to Rest

7. **Magic and Lethal: The Asbestos Memorial** will become the first of its kind in North America. This public art icon will be installed in 2021 in a prime location on the Vancouver waterfront.

Powered only by the wind, “Wind Wheel Mobile” by Vancouver artist Douglas Taylor will be a powerful metaphor for life, death and renewal.

Together with compelling poetry by John MacLachlan Gray, Magic and Lethal will be [a permanent reminder of the asbestos tragedy that continues to take lives](#).

9. [The story of union organizing among women workers](#) was described through the **1918 Vancouver Steam Laundries Strike** in a lesson plan easily adapted for classroom use and by online learners.

10. Our **NEW** podcast: **“On the Line: Stories of BC Workers”** debuted with three episodes. Produced by volunteers and staff, each [podcast episode highlights a different story](#) from BC’s labour history using archival recordings, voice actors and music.



*LEFT: In Union Is Strength: Vancouver Island Coal Miners march in Ladysmith during 1913 strike. Ladysmith Museum & Archives 2007.034.2578*

11. Our first **virtual walking tour** took participants along the route of the 1935 [On to Ottawa Trek](#) to highlight key locations and events.

12. For twenty-two days in July and August 1983, [BC Government Employees’ Union \(BCGEU\) members in Kamloops](#) occupied the **Tranquille Institution** to protect their jobs and the future of its 350 residents. We supported the BCGEU as they told their story with a bronze plaque, a book and a video.

13. Our **monthly electronic newsletter** shares [seldom heard stories of BC labour](#) as well as updates on our work to promote BC’s labour history.

14. While fascism was sweeping Europe in 1938, Vancouver crowds cheered the visiting production **“Pins and Needles”** with a cast made up entirely of unionized garment workers from New York City. The production - [at Vancouver’s Empress Theatre](#) - mocked tyrants and celebrated the working class.

15. The **Indigenous and Hawaiian roots of BC’s longshore unions** was explored through [a post on Don Garcia](#).

16. The stormy history of union [organizing in BC’s private hospitals](#) was shared by a someone who was part of a **1974 unionizing drive at a private hospital** in Vancouver.

TONIGHT AND TUES, 8:30  
Matinee Tues. at 2:30  
**ROLLICKING  
MUSICAL REVUE**  
**PINS AND NEEDLES**  
Absolutely No. 1 New York Co.  
(See N.Y. Times Sept. 3.)  
Cast of 55 . . . 19 scenes.  
SEATS RIGHT NOW  
M. A. Kelly, 659 Gran  
Trin. 3285 to 5:30; aft  
theatre box office

One Big Union for  
Two  
from Pins and  
Needles  
Performer: CAB CALLOWAY AND HIS  
ORCHESTRA  
Writer: Harold J. Rome [1938]



17. **From Barbados to the Vancouver waterfront.** A “Longshoreman’s Longshoreman” – [Fitzclarence St John](#) was “a union man through and through”.

18. There was a ship-load of trouble on the [Nanaimo waterfront in January 1893](#). A daring night-time raid on a non-union vessel netted the **Coast Seamen's Union** five new members, and a heap of legal problems.

19. We couldn’t walk beside you, but our [Walking Tours are available for self-guided outings](#) on our **Walking Tour app**. Vancouver, Victoria and Prince Rupert tours are hosted.

20. We began a partnership with the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley to research and write a history of **South Asians in the BC labour movement**. [The project will continue through 2021](#).



[www.labourheritagecentre.ca](http://www.labourheritagecentre.ca)



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