

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.



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](#).

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

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.





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](#).



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