Labour History Project Working People: A History of Labour in BC



**Ocean Falls**

Film Summary: The story of company towns and their unique role and legacy in the economic and social fabric of the province…with a specific focus on the west coast town of Ocean Falls.

**Curriculum Application:** Social Studies 10

**The Essential Question:** What is the enduring legacy of company towns in the province of BC? Is it the story of corporate control and capitalist greed that took advantage, or the vibrant and hard-working workers and families that created community and still live on in the hearts of those who experienced the “company town”?

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What historical factors

**Summary of the Lesson Activities**

1. **Focus questions** for the vignette provide a short lesson option. (20-30 minutes)
2. **Discussion** following the questions on the existence of company towns and the incredibly vibrant communities they gave birth to. This might also take the form of a **debate**, revolving around the stark contrast between company priorities and community heartbeat…which is the enduring legacy?
3. **Then and Now;** dwell on a series of images depicting Ocean Falls then, and the same or similar scene today. What powerful role does this kind of reflection serve?
4. **Compare and Contrast research project**; journey through the story of another company town, and then compare that to the story of Ocean Falls.

Learning Standards

1. To explore and unpack the story of Ocean Falls, its rise and fall as a quintessential “company town” in the extractive primary industry enterprises of BC. **Continuity and Change**
2. Assess the varying perspectives of the contributions and importance of company towns in the development of British Columbia. **Significance.**
3. Compare and contrast the underlying conditions and actions that influenced the development and demise of Ocean Falls with another company town in British Columbia. **Cause and Consequence.**
4. Assess the justification for competing accounts of Company towns after investigating points of contention, reliability of sources, and adequacy of evidence, including data **(Evidence)**

**Materials and Resources Provided**

[“Ocean Falls” Episode #- Working People-A History of Labour in British Columbia](https://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/ocean/)

Document 1: Company Towns

Document 2: A Brief History of Ocean Falls -BC Archives

Lesson Activity 1: Then and Now

Lesson Activity 2: Further Investigations

**Additional Suggested Materials**

[Not Dead Yet, The Wet Beauty of Ocean Falls](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ocean-falls-government-25-people-town-british-columbia-canada-remote-1.5177001)

[Ocean Falls Museum](http://www.oceanfallsmuseum.com/History.htm)

Ocean Falls: After the Whistle -A conversation with Brian McDaniel

[Welcome to Ocean Falls Book - After the Whistle](http://www.oceanfallsbook.com/) (substantial “glimpses” into the chapters are offered)

**Lesson Activities**

1. View the vignette, **Ocean Falls** with your class and assign the six vignette questions to be answered following the vignette. The questions could be answered individually or in small groups. End the exercise with a class discussion; emphasis is suggested on question 6. For additional information either backgrounder on Ocean Falls found in Document 1 or 2 could be used to support this activity.
2. Photocopy the 2 pages of **Lesson Activity 1, Then and Now** and have the students complete the responses individually and then in pairs or small groups discuss their responses. Have each group share a summary of their responses with the rest of the class. How might past residents of Ocean Falls recollect their experiences of the community at a reunion?
3. For further investigations into Ocean Falls, select questions from **Lesson Activity 2: Further Investigations** for your class. The questions could be investigated in pairs and reported back to the class. This assignment will require further studies beyond the vignette and resource materials provided. The [Ocean Falls museum](http://www.oceanfallsmuseum.com/History.htm) site is a good place to start your inquiry into any one of these 10 questions.
4. There are many other company towns in BC that could be investigated for comparison to Ocean Falls. Select a format for presentation such as a gallery walk, poster board, power point and create some common subjects to be reported on in the student’s final presentation. Suggested topics: origins, early development; life in the town, connections to the outside world, contemporary economic challenges, labour-management relations. Some suggestions are: Powell River, Britannia, Cumberland, Trail, Gold River, Tumbler Ridge, Kitimat, Maillardville, Anyox, and Kitsault.

**Vignette Questions**

1. Why was such a remote location as Ocean Falls chosen as a site for a pulp and paper mill?
2. What challenges would the company face in getting the mill into production?
3. Why would workers and their families chose to locate in such an isolated place?
4. What amenities did the company provide in the town to make life more enjoyable?
5. What prompted Crown Zellerbach to close the mill in 1973?
6. How did the closure impact the workers and their families in Ocean Falls?

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Gerry Hanlon and Wayne Axford