**Lesson: Farmworkers**

**Lesson Activity 4: Jigsaw Activity and Discussion**

**Jigsaw Activity 4a:** Summarize the main facts, ideas, and your group’s conclusions from your assigned sources in this organizer. This will be the foundation for a class discussion and/or other activities designated by your teacher.

**Main Ideas/facts Name:**

**Source 1: “Women and Children on the Farms”**

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

**Source 2: “Unionizing: the point of view of the Farmworker”**

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

**Source 3: “Hazards on the Farm”**

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

**Source 4: “From Home to Work”**

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

**Source 5: “What about the Farmers?”**

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

**Our Conclusions:**

**Lesson Activity 4b: Images and Narratives for Inquiry and Jigsaw Activities**

**Group 1: “Women and Children on the Farms”**

##### *http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/mckim1.gifSource 1*

Photograph by Jim McDowell, 1979

***Readying flats of strawberries for weighing at a farm in the Fraser Valley.***

"When people go to the store and buy strawberries they don't think about where those strawberries came from or about the people who provided them. For a few years in the early '80s we changed that attitude to a certain extent, but now it's back to Square One. My older daughter knows where the food comes from. She was practically born on the picket line and she was with me all the time. But my younger daughter just thinks that food comes from the supermarket." - *Former CFU President Raj Chouhan, 1995*

Figure 1 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/mckim1.htm



Figure 2 http://content.lib.sfu.ca/utils/getthumbnail/collection/cfu\_2/id/0

##### *Source 2*

Photograph by Craig Berggold, 1983

***Harvesting in fields near Aldergrove in early November*.**

"A group of shrewd men, usually resident in Canada for 10 or 15 years...became middlemen. They transported labour to the fields on behalf of the growers. Most of the farmworkers were new immigrants and became dependent on these labour contractors. The workers had no knowledge of the English language and lacked the other skills necessary to successfully seek employment in a totally unfamiliar land. Farm work provided these workers some comfort because a majority of them came from the Punjab where they were used to working in open fields. Many felt isolated during the winter and some would work for meager wages in order to socialize with other folks from the Punjab. It must be noted that 75 per cent of farmworkers and 95 per cent of domestic workers are women." - *Author/activist Sadhu Binning, 1986*

##### *Source 3*

Photograph by Fred Wilson, 1980

***Three young farmworkers stop work to pose at a Clearbrook farm. Pacific Tribune Photo***

"Imagine the public outcry if it were determined that the children of the dominant white working-class majority were attending dangerous industrial work sites, such as construction or chemical manufacturing, because no childcare options were available to the parents. However, the children to which we refer are the children of people of colour who have immigrated to Canada in pursuit of work and a better life....Despite the fact that the

Figure 3 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/trio2.htm

children of farmworkers are subjected to dangerous conditions at the work sites, very little public debate has dealt with this important issue." - *Farmworkers and Their Children, 1995*

"Today, in the absence of public scrutiny and the vigilance of the community, pesticide drums are dumped behind barns. The ministry of the environment employs a handful of inspectors, none of which are solely focused on the agriculture industry. Despite recent changes by the WCB to include the inspection of farm work sites, old machinery is stored haphazardly and creates an unsafe environment for children. Due to ignorance of the regulations, at times children accompany their parents to the fields before an appropriate no-entry period has lapsed. Because of the location of the work, childcare facilities are unavailable to farmworkers. In addition, most childcare would cost farmworkers more than they earn in a whole day." - *Farmworkers and Their Children, 1995*

##### GROUP 2: “Unionizing: the point of view of the Farmworker”

##### *Source 4*

Poster by Claire Kujundzic, 1987

*This poster was designed to advertise a compilation cassette tape put together by Vancouver-area musicians in support of the farmworkers. The drawing also appears on T-shirts the union sells.*

Who's feeding you?  
What do you know about the people

who grow your food?  
Who's feeding you?  
Do they eat as well as you do?  
Who's feeding you?  
Do they share the wealth they produce?  
They're treated like slaves,  
All the time, 12-hour days,  
Paid less than minimum wage,  
Unite and fight, organize, Zindabad!

*From Who's Feeding You, written by Julius Fisher and M. Allan, performed by Ginger Group, 1987*

Figure 4 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/talk.htm

##### *Source 5*

Photographer Unknown, 1978

*An early snapshot of the Farm Workers' Organizing Committee, the predecessor of the Canadian Farmworkers' Union*.

"For the farmworkers, the achievement of a union will mean an end to the long history of being among the most underpaid and exploited section of Canadian workers, of being denied the status of workers, of being denied human dignity and of being able to carry on

Figure 5 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/fwoc.htm

organized struggle for their rights as workers. Working people can defend their rights only through their unions. By building their own union, the farmworkers will put an end to their past history and move forward to an era of struggling hand-in-hand with other organized sections of the Canadian workers. Not only will the union be able to phase out the labour contractor who is greatly responsible for the oppression of the farmworker, but it will enable the farmworker to wage successful struggles for legal protection and better working conditions." - *FWOC press release, April, 1980*

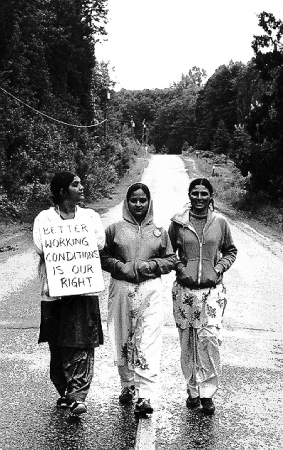
***SOURCE 6***

Figure 6 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/road.htm

Photograph by Craig Berggold, 1984

*Hoss Farm worker Jasweer Kaur Brar (right) and collegues on picket duty along the lonely road leading to the farm. Eleven women had been fired for backing the union.*

"Working on my family's farm in India, I was my own boss. And because it was a family-owned farm, there was pride in the farm and in the work I did there. Here, I have no say and I'm taken advantage of. There is no respect for the work I do. I'm working for someone else and I'm subordinated by him. The employer is asking too much. He isn't respecting us very much. We were already working so hard - such long hours. That, combined with the loss of pride that I experienced coming from a family farm in the Punjab, made up my mind that I must do something." - Striker Jasweer Kaur Brar, 1984

"The 11 women brought their children with them to the picket line and for days shouts of 'Prani picker viposlo!' (All pickers back to work!) echoed down the long laneway to the Hoss Farm. Picketers were clapping, singing and chanting slogans: 'Canadian Farmworkers' Union - Zindabad!'" - *The Farmworker, 1984*

***GROUP 3: “Hazards on the Farm”***

***Source 7***

Photograph by Steve Bosch, 1981

*Farmworkers in their "living quarters." Nineteen-year-old Jarnail Singh Deol ( back row, centre) died of pesticide poisoning that the coroner's jury determined was preventable homocide and ruled that the Workers' Compensation Board should regulate pesticide use. The provincial government blocked the idea.*

"Jarnail's death is no mere accident of fate. His death is a monument to government inaction. It is a statute to 'further study' an icon to 'the proper time.' To those who demand patience, to those who are tired of our voices shouting for equality, we say: No More Deaths! No more watching our young people die, our children being poisoned. Our children are as precious as yours - our young people are our future." - *CFU press release, 1982*

Figure 7 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/deol.htm

Labour Minister Bob McClelland says the assertion that the lack of government regulation contributed to Deol's death is "a ridiculous" conclusion. "The WCB cannot be even remotely blamed. Even if my decision was different about the way regulations would be handled in the farm workplace, it wouldn't have made any difference in this case," he told reporters. McClelland said "someone has been murdered by someone else. I think our society should be busy finding out who committed the crime." The angry minister did not even respond when asked whether "that someone might be the government in its failure to impose regulations." - *Vancouver Sun, March 17, 1983*

"We have lost a great deal by losing Jarnail. He was our support. Why should the government give a damn? Sons of Cabinet ministers don't spray pesticides." - *Jarnail's father Sadhu Singh Deol, 1983*

***Source 8***

Photograph by Steve Bosch, *1981*

*A pesticide dispenser at the entrance to a farmer's field in the Fraser Valley.*

"Our study shows a higher-than-normal ratio of farmworkers die from cancer of the liver, prostrate and lymph glands. The study also shows an increase in leukemia and aplastic anemia among farmworkers and it is reasonable to assume the diseases were caused by pesticides. Our report to the Workers' Compensation Board recommends better equipment and more safety precautions for farmworkers exposed to pesticides - I doubt there will be changes without enforcement by the WCB." - *Dr. Eric Young, B.C. Medical Association Environmental Health Committee Chairman, 1983*

Figure 8 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/toxic.htm

 "While our organization is concerned about pesticide safety, we feel the (B.C. Medical Association's) report findings are overstated and unjustified. The public is overreacting. Educating farmers and workers is the answer, not more regulations" - *B.C. Federation of Agriculture president George Aylard, 1982*

"A voluntary system of pesticide safety would be like asking you to pay the government what taxes you think you owe." - *West Coast Environmental Law Society lawyer Marilyn Kansky, 1983*

"Farmworkers work in the one workplace in British Columbia that is regularly and systematically poisoned for the purpose of killing life. Insects, fungi and weeds are the target, but farmworkers are inevitably exposed to the killing agents." - *CFU submission to the federal government, September, 1981*

**Source 9 (on the right)**

Photograph by Craig Berggold, 1983

*The first image from Berggold's art piece A True Story Health and Safety Regulations Now!*

"I guess it's all in your point of view. But from this perspective something has got to change..." Port Coquitlam blueberry grower Vera Harvey agrees to stop using controversial (cancer-causing) fungicide Triforine on her crops, not to protect workers harvesting her crops or the people living nearby, but because she says she's tired of being phoned by people complaining about the spraying. "The only reason I'm stopping is to stop those kooks," she says. - *Vancouver Sun, May 22, 1982*

Figure 9

http://content.lib.sfu.ca/cdm/ref/collection/cfu\_2/id/169

##### GROUP 4: “From Home to Work”

##### *Source 10*

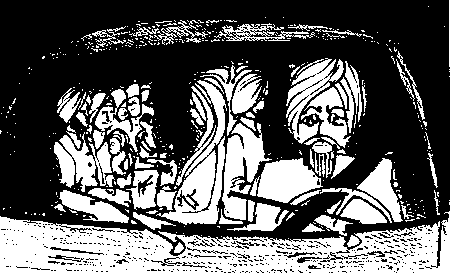
Photograph by Steve Bosch, 1981.

*A farmworker stands outside her summer "home" during picking season in the Fraser Valley.*

"Farmworkers don't complain about their living conditions for fear of losing their jobs. The farmers are watching all the time and the government inspectors come only after receiving a complaint and will often identify the complainant to the farmer. The farmer fires them the next day. As well, many of the camps are not recognizable living quarters from the outside, so the inspectors don't even know they exist. The chief building inspector says there are no serious problems with farm camps right now, but we estimate there are 1,500 farmworkers living in substandard conditions in the Fraser Valley." - *CFU researcher David Lane, July, 1981*

Figure 10 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/bosch.htm

##### *Source 11*

Drawing by Shirley McGrew, 1986

*One of a series of drawings made for teaching ESL classes. The series concentrates of farmworkers' lives and the benefits of the union.*

"It's 5:00 and standing out on the sidewalk I can see the lights of the van grow brighter. It's only supposed to seat 15 people but there must be at least 25 and they still find space for my body. I can barely squeeze onto the wooden bench with my knees crunched against my chest. I look at the elders' faces and can't tell if the stone look is fatigue or resignation; all the same they sit silently. The smell is awful; the contractor didn't bother to wash yesterday's vomit out of the van. I keep imagining what would happen if we had an accident. At least the driver gets to wear a seatbelt." - *CFU undercover organizer, 1988*

Figure 11 http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/van.htm

**GROUP 5: “What about the Farmers?”**

**Source 12**

"There’s no reason the union has to get militant or anything like that. We’re all willing to improve conditions. But at the same time, we’re not willing to lose that freedom by having a union on the farm and having one man dictate to you and having one man control all your labour. The way it works right now is a free-enterprise system where the farmers can hire whichever contractor they feel like or the contractor can go to whichever farm he wants and the people can work for any contractor they want. It’s a very happy-go-lucky thing and if you’re being mistreated some place, you can go to another one." (*Murray, a farmer who became president of the B.C Strawberry Growers' Association presents the farmers’ viewpoint in the 1982 documentary film A Time to Rise.*)

**Source 13**

"These kids want all the protection of a working man - the compensation and the Unemployment Insurance. When I was a kid picking berries, I never got no gas allowance, no compensation, or anything like that. You don't need compensation to pick berries. I've never heard of anybody yet straining their back picking berries. It's not the best job in the world, but it's a good job for kids to learn how to work for somebody else." *Farmer Martin Smith in the 1982 documentary A Time to Rise. Zindabad!*

**4. *Source Materials***

1. SFU Special Collection on the Canadian Farmworkers Union Project. Significant source for Inquiry. A selection of more than 700 publications, documents, photos, and other significant items from the complete CFU archival collection held by the SFU Library’s Special Collection.

<http://www.lib.sfu.ca/special-collections/canadian-farmworkers-union>

Note: Photographs in CFUP above are readily accessed through this friendly link: <http://content.lib.sfu.ca/cdm/search/collection/cfu_2/searchterm/photographs/field/all/mode/all/conn/and/order/title/ad/asc>

Note: CFUP includes the very detailed and useful Canadian Farmworkers’ Union Survey of 1994 (especially after page 23) illustrating wages and working conditions facing 340 farmworkers in the Fraser Valley):<http://content.lib.sfu.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/cfu_2/id/5064/show/5042/rec/16>

2. Another valuable online publication outlines the conditions faced by Fraser Valley farmworkers and the Canadian Farmworkers’ Union. “Zindabad!” an emancipatory slogan meaning “long live” or to give “life to” and idea or person originated in India and Pakistan. See:<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cfu/intro.htm>

3. WorkSafe BC 2008 Investigative Report on 1997 Van Crash killing 3 Farmworkers. Also see video simulation of Accident. Coroner’s Inquest began 2009. See: <http://www.worksafebc.com/news_room/features/2009/new_120409.asp>

4. CBC News Report on 2007 Abbotsford van crash describes ill-equipped, and overloaded vehicle commonly used to transport farmworkers. See comments by Jim Sinclair: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/abbotsford-b-c-van-crash-sparks-calls-for-ban-1.697562>

5. WorkSafe BC. Scroll down to videos for advice for Agricultural Workers: tractor rollovers and pesticide dangers (in Punjabi for Sikh workers and Spanish for Mexican workers in BC): <http://www2.worksafebc.com/Portals/Agriculture/SeasonalAgriculturalWorkerProgram.asp>

6. *A Time to Rise*. (1981) Award-winning film on the struggle to unionize farmworkers of BC. Cost of $340 includes classroom rights. See: <http://www.patwardhan.com/films/timetorise.htm>

7. Many online videos allow a deeper investigation of the farmworker struggle and provide an invaluable basis for student Inquiry. For example:

For the North American context, See “Fighting for our Lives,” (part 1 of 6) in the Children in the Fields documentary of the 1973 California Grape Strike. Thousands are arrested and many injured as growers attempting to crush the workers’ attempt to unionize.

Also see “Farmworker housing and working conditions – Youtube”

8. Mexican-based awareness training program for farmworkers in Okanagan and Fraser Valley. See WorkSafe Magazine, Sept/Oct 2011: <http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/newsletters/worksafe_magazine/Assets/PDF/wsm_Sep_Oct_2011.pdf>