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



**The Fishermen’s Strike of 1900**

**Film Summary:** A series of strikes rocked the fishing industry in Steveston, BC in the early 1900s. This story examines the context and the efforts made to unite fishers across racial lines.

**The Essential Question:**

What were the qualities of the leaders of the Fisher Strike of 1900 which helped build a strong union?

**Curriculum Application**

Social Studies 10

**Summary of the Lesson Activities**

1. Focus questions for the vignette provide a short lesson option. ( 15 minutes)
2. Jigsaw activity on the participants in the Fishers strike of 1900.
3. Small group presentation on assigned perspectives of the strike
4. Assessment provided in a short writing assignment on the qualities of a union organizer.
5. Extension activity on other union organizers; historical and contemporary

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate an understanding of tactics used by employers and unions in conflicts.
2. Apply the use of primary documents to assemble a biography of Fisher union organizer, Frank Rogers, in the strike of 1900.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the motivation and challenges of union organizers in the early 1900s, and in the contemporary world, through biographic research.
4. This lesson affords the teacher the opportunity to explain and discuss the gender specific term fishermen and the more common recent term fishers.
5. This lesson is designed to be taught in conjunction with a grade 10 unit on the development of BC and its history in the late Victorian period. The grade 11 unit on the Victorian era also overlaps with this lesson, and is an effective lead in to the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.
6. The teacher should give a brief introduction to the topic of the salmon fishing industry in BC—its primary importance to the economy, the dangers and rewards of working as a fisher and the hold on the industry by the cannery owners.
7. The teacher should then play the video vignette “Fisher Strike of 1900” for the class, asking them to pay particular attention to the diverse groups of fishers, the reasons they chose to organize unions and to strike and the tactics used by both the cannery owners and the fishers.
8. Once the video is finished the teacher can solicit some class discussion with the following prompts: “Why did the workers strike? How did the cannery owners react to the strike? What were the successful strategies used by the union?
9. Proceed to the Jigsaw Activity provided in the download files (Activity 1- Jigsaw Activity)
10. Extension Activity 1-Biography of a Union Organizer can be assigned if time permits.
11. Which groups competed for the fishing resources in British Columbia at the turn of the century?
12. Why did Cannery owners exploit the divisions between competing groups of fishers?
13. Why did the Japanese Fishers defy the strike and continue fishing?
14. What group provided security for the cannery operators during the strike?
15. Why did the Japanese fishers return to the strike after 1 day?
16. What were the results of the Fishers Strike of 1900?

**Additional Suggested Materials**

[The Labour Movement in British Columbia 1840-1914](https://teachbcdb.bctf.ca/download/157?filename=bc-labour-history-1840-1914.docx)

**Materials and Resources Provided**

* [The Fishermens’ Strike-Working People: A History of Labour in British Columbia](https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1454421/uiconf_id/26824312/entry_id/0_235n8j9b/embed/dynamic)
* *Activity 1: Jigsaw Activity*
* *Extension Activity 1*- Biography of a Union Organizer
* Set of primary documents and secondary sources about Frank Rogers, union leader of the 1900 Fisher Strike (Documents 1-4)

**Vignette Questions**

**Lesson Activities**

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Janet Nichol