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



**The Professionals**

Film Summary: A short profile on Ethel Johns, an important figure in the history of nursing in British Columbia.

**Curriculum Application:** Social Studies 10, Social Studies 11 Explorations and Social Justice 12

**The Essential Question:** How did the rights of women workers impact on the occupation of nursing over the twentieth century?

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What historical factors

**Summary of the Lesson Activities**

1. Focus questions for the vignette provide a short lesson option. (15 minutes)

2. Small group activity examines the history of nursing over the twentieth century by examining illustrations of nurse uniforms. (one hour)

3. Extension Activity - Small group activity involves short reading on the BC Nurses’ Union strike of 1989, followed by discussion questions. (one hour)

4. Further Research - A list of research topics and resources for students to consider.

1. To compare and contrast the *continuities and change* experienced by women in nursing in BC/Canada over the twentieth century and appreciate women’s contributions in health care (*significance*).
2. Assess how prevailing conditions and the actions of individuals or groups influence events, decisions, or developments by examining the role of the nursing profession in the changing role of women in society. (*cause and consequence*)
3. Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions, gather, interpret, and analyze ideas: and communicate findings and decisions.

Learning Standards

**Materials and Resources Provided**

[The Professionals- Working People-A History of Labour in British Columbia](https://www.knowledge.ca/program/working-people-history-labour-british-columbia)

* **Lesson Activity 1-4 –** Details of the 4 lesson activities are provided.
* **Appendix 1**  - Group activity on nurses uniforms throughout the decades.
* **Appendix 2**- Information Worksheet- History of Nursing in BC/Canada
* **Appendix 3**- Reading on the BC Nurses’ Union Strike of 1989.

**Additional Suggested Materials**

* [These Were the Reasons : Chapter 7: Fighting for Equity: The '30s, The War years and A Shoreworkers' story.](https://youtu.be/NFwpDcBUPlw)
* The History of Nursing in BC - <http://bcnursinghistory.ca>
* The BC Nurses’ Union - <https://www.bcnu.org>
* Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association - <http://www.indigenousnurses.ca>
* There are several books about nursing in BC and Canada, including a biography of Ethel Johns by Margaret M. Street, entitled *Watch-fires on the mountains: The life and writings of Ethel Johns, (*University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1973.)

**Lesson Activities**

1. Lesson Activity 1 - Students watch the vignette, “The Professionals” and answer the vignette questions above.
2. Lesson Activity 2: Small group activity using the provided illustrations of nursing uniforms. See Lesson Activity 2 for full details of the lesson.
3. Lesson Activity 3: BC Nurse’s Union Strike of 1989; small group activity with guiding questions and discussion.
4. Activity 4 - Topics for Further Research: see Appendix 1 for additional details.

**Vignette Questions**

1. How was nursing regarded in the early 1900s?
2. How did Ethel Johns challenge this attitude about nurses in 1919?
3. Why did doctors resent the university education of nurses?
4. What type of work would nurses’ aides do and how would this change nurses’ work?
5. How did nurses’ work improve by the 1940s?

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Janet Nicol