

Date Reviewed

March 2023

Course

[Social Justice 12](#)

Topic

Workers' Rights

Big Idea

Social justice initiatives can transform individuals and systems.

Essential Question

What is the contribution of the labour movement in achieving many social programs, policies, and laws in Canada?

Learning Standards**Content**

Students are expected to know the following:

- processes, methods, and approaches individuals, groups, and institutions use to promote social justice

Curricular Competencies

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

- Determine and assess the long- and short-term causes and consequences, and the intended and unintended consequences, of an event, legislative and judicial decision, development, policy, or movement (cause and consequence)¹²

Core Competencies

[Communication](#) - I can name benefits that we enjoy today because of the labour movement.

[Thinking](#) - I can analyze the causes and consequences of milestones in workers' rights.

[Personal and Social](#) - I can consider my personal opinions about unions and workers' rights.

First People's Principles of Learning

Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Introduction

- Write the term “labour union” on the board. Below draw a T-Chart and label the sides “Advantages” and “Disadvantages”. Have students brainstorm pros and cons of unions. Have them consider both the workers’ and employers’ perspectives.
- Show the short videos [Thank the Unions](#) (0:53) and [Are Unions Useful Anymore?](#) (1:00) from Canadian Labour Congress’s One Minute Message Contest.

Pre-Assessment

- Challenge students to list ten benefits that we enjoy today because of the labour movement. (*Child labour laws, minimum wage, 8 hour work day, 5 day work week, parental leave, right to refuse unsafe work, workers compensation, medicare, health & safety, lunch breaks, paid vacation, the weekend, social security, pensions, whistle blower protection, privacy rights...*)

Interactive Learning Activities

Part 1: Unions and Workers’ Rights

- Have students brainstorm what they know about workers’ rights. Do they know of any workplace issues? If so, why are these particular problems important?
- Provide each student with a copy of the handout “Workers’ Rights: Where Do You Stand?”. Have them respond to each statement based on their personal opinion and knowledge of workers’ rights.
- Explain that Madeleine Parent was a union organizer and social activist. Over the course of her life, she fought for better working conditions for workers in Canada. She addressed issues such as long working hours, unsafe conditions, and equal pay.
- Provide students with access to *Canada’s History* comic [Fighting for Fairness](#) and time to read and discuss the comic with a partner.
- Then provide each student with a copy of the handout “Workers’ Rights: Where Did She Stand?”. Have students read each statement and circle the response that reflects Madeleine Parent’s perspective on workers’ rights. Students should refer back to the comic to gather evidence for their responses.

Part 2: Milestones in Workers’ Rights

- Provide students with access to the Canadian Labour Congress’s [History of Labour in Canada](#) and the handout “Workers’ Rights: Causes and Consequences”.
- Have students work with a partner to determine the causes and consequences of each milestone.
- Lead a discussion using the [Think Pair Share](#) strategy:
 - What was the most significant milestone?
 - Who continues to benefit from this change?
 - How would Canada be different if this had not been achieved?

Post-Assessment

- Reflection: How have unions and the labour movement contributed to social justice in Canada?

Extension Activities

- Explain that Canadians celebrate Labour Day on the first Monday in September. For many it feels like the last day of summer because school usually begins the next day. But why do we celebrate Labour Day? What is it about and why did it begin?

- Have students read the article [The First Labour Day](#) from *Canada's History* and then summarize the article using the [5Ws + H](#) questions.

Additional References

“9 Times Canada’s Labour Movement Made History and Shaped the Country We Live in Today.” 2017. *Press Progress*.

<https://pressprogress.ca/9-times-canada-labour-movement-made-history-and-shaped-the-country-we-live-in-today/>

“A Brief History of Labour Day and Workers' Safety & Rights in Canada.” 2021. Safety Line.

<https://safetylinelneworker.com/blog/a-brief-history-of-labour-day-and-workers-safety-rights>

Canada. 2020. “Young Workers.” *Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety*.

<https://www.ccohs.ca/youngworkers/>

“Canada History Week 2019: The Winnipeg General Strike.” 2019. *Historica Canada*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRF5pXVtbDc&t=53s>

Canadian Labour Congress. 2021. *Canadian Labour Congress*. <https://canadianlabour.ca/>

“Canadian Labour History”. [n.d.] *Canadian Museum of History*.

<https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/hist/labour/lab01e.html>

“History and Development of Unions in Canada.” 2017. *Canadian Legal FAQs*. The Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta.

<https://www.law-faqs.org/national-faqs/history-and-development-of-unions-in-canada/>

“History of Labour in Canada.” 2015. *Canadian Labour Congress*.

<https://canadianlabour.ca/uncategorized/why-unions-history-labour-canada/>

“Labour Movement.” 2021. *History of Social Change*.

<http://historyofsocialchange.ca/stories/labour-movement/>

Rouillard, J., Frank, D., Palmer, B.D. and McCallum, T. 2015. “Working-Class History.” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/working-class-history>

“Workers' Rights: Where do you Stand?” 2019. *Canada's History*.

<https://www.canadashistory.ca/education/classroom-resources/workers-rights-where-do-you-stand>

Materials and Resources

Workers' Rights: Where Do You Stand?

Read the statements below and circle your response based on your personal opinion and knowledge of workers' rights.

If workers are being paid, they do not have the right to complain.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Some children should have to work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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If a worker gets injured on the job it is their fault.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Workplaces have always been safe.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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There should be no limit on how many hours a person works in a day.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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All people should be paid equally for the same work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Workers have the right to a safe workplace.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Workers have the right to know about dangers in their workplace.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Workers have the right to report dangerous parts of their work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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There are still things that can be improved about workers' rights.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Explain how you know what you do about issues in the workplace.

Workers' Rights: Where Did She Stand?

Read the statements below and circle the response that reflects Madeleine Parent's perspective on workers' rights. Refer back to the comic to gather evidence for your answers.

If workers are being paid, they do not have the right to complain.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Some children should have to work.

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Explain why you think Madeleine Parent would feel this way about these issues.

Workers' Rights: Causes and Consequences

Causes	Milestone	Consequences
	shorter work week	
	general strike	
	unemployment insurance	
	mandatory union dues	
	bargaining rights for government workers	
	workplace safety	
	maternity & parental benefits	