

Working People: A History of Labour in BC



Bea Zucco

Film Summary: Out of the loss of her husband to an occupational-related illness came one woman's crusade for change.

Curriculum Application:

Youth work in trades 11/12,
Work Experience 12A/12B,
CLE, CLC and Social Justice
12, Law Studies 12

The Essential Questions:

How does Worker's Compensation (WorkSafe BC) benefit workers? How can individuals advocate effectively for changes in workplace safety?

Summary of the Lesson Activities

1. Focus questions for the vignette provides a short lesson option. (15 Minutes)
2. Small group activity/discussion to better understand the role of WorkSafe BC to ensure safe working conditions for workers in British Columbia.
3. Individual or small group activities to understand and evaluate the role Bea Zucco made to achieve change for families of victims of work-place injury or death.
4. Individuals or small groups of students work on creating newspaper style articles on the issues presented in the vignette and supporting print materials.

Learning Standards

1. To be able to explain what workplace safety protocols are in place to protect workers in British Columbia.
2. To analyze the role of individual citizens in promoting social justice in Canada.
3. To be aware of how individuals can provide leadership as agents for change in such matters as workplaces safety.
4. Contribute to care of self, others, and community
5. Access information and ideas on workplace safety prior to work placement to determine workplace safety risks.
6. Identify, demonstrate, and incorporate provincially legislated safety and site-specific work-site safety procedures while at the work placement.
7. Understand occupational health and safety rights and responsibilities, including trade-specific hazards, risk reduction, and the rights and **procedures** to refuse unsafe work.

Materials and Resources Provided

- [“Bea Zucco” Working People – A History of Labour in British Columbia \(Vignette\)](#)
- Lesson Activity 1: Backgrounder and discussion questions.
- [Podcast - Working People Built BC \(labourheritagecentre.ca\)](#)
Episode 7: Bea Zucco
Episode 17: Asbestos - A Lethal Legacy

Additional Suggested Materials

- [WorkSafe BC](#)
- [Historical data describing the Workers' Compensation system in British Columbia 1917 to 1942 and 1943-1973 and 1973-2002](#)
- [On the Line: A History of the British Columbia Labour Movement](#) (Ch 12: pages 139-141) Also available at [knowbc.com](#) (password access available from school or public libraries)
- [Day of Mourning: BC Schools Project](#)
- [Lesson Plans: Workplace Health & Safety \(Asbestos, Work is Hazardous to your Health\), Babine Lake](#)
- [The Asbestos Memorial Project](#)

Vignette Questions

1. Why did WCB deny the Zucco claim?
2. How did this illness affect the entire family?
3. What methods did Bea Zucco and the family employ to achieve justice?
4. Why did Bea continue her campaign after her husband died?
5. Did the fact that Bea Zucco was a mother affect her activism? Explain.

Lesson Activities

1. Teachers will need to explain that the Workmen’s Compensation Board was changed to its new operational name WorksSafe BC in 2005.
2. Students can read the brief biography (Lesson Activity 1) prior to the viewing of the vignette, Bea Zucco and then proceed to the discussion questions contained in the lesson activity individually or in small groups.
3. For extra depth and understanding of Bea Zucco’s story listen to the podcast on “Bea Zucco” Episode 7 at the BC Labour Heritage Centre.
4. The story of the Asbestos Memorial installed at the Vancouver Convention Centre West in 2022 is discussed in greater detail in [The Asbestos Memorial Project](#). The page has links to video presentations by Laird Cronk and Lee Loftus and the podcast Asbestos - A Lethal Legacy (Episode 17)

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Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Dan Blake and Wayne Axford

Backgrounder

Bea Zucco was a New Westminster mother who fought to achieve justice for her family after her husband's struggle with a work-related illness and the Workers Compensation insurance program, and ultimately the BC Government. Zucco's husband developed silicosis after years of mining but he and the family were denied full compensation by the Workmen's Compensation Board as a result of government policy and WCB practices. After appealing the WCBs decisions, Bea Zucco engaged in a series of protests to raise awareness to her claim and others like it. From picketing WCB offices, staging a sit down protest with her children at the BC Legislature, and taking her campaign on the road with her "Crusade Car for Silicosis", Zucco stood up for the rights of injured workers and their families. While Zucco ultimately won her battle, that was not before her husband died and she and her children had been evicted from the family home.

Zucco's story raises important questions about the effect of work-related injuries and illness on families and communities, the effectiveness of Workers Compensation insurance programs, and how individuals can affect a change in government policy.

Instructions: Watch the vignette and answer the questions the best you can during or after the film. Then discuss your responses with a small group. Be prepared to share comments with the class. For extra depth and understanding of the story, listen to the [podcast on Bea Zucco](#). A transcript of the podcast is available for classroom use if desired.

1. Is Bea Zucco "extraordinary"?
2. Would you have done what Bea Zucco did? What would you have done differently, and why?
3. What do you think made the most difference in changing government policy?
4. Consider Bea Zucco's comments at the end of the vignette. How does she feel about the WCB at the end of her campaign? What are your thoughts on her comments?
5. Was justice achieved?
6. Did Workers Compensation meet its mandate? Explain.
7. Bea Zucco is an excellent example of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Write an account of her work that illustrates this idea.
8. Challenge assignment for further understanding. Research local individuals or groups that are advocating for social justice issues in your own community. Present your findings and draw comparisons to the work of Bea Zucco.

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For additional videos and lessons on the subject of Workplace Safety visit the [Labour Heritage Centre's Lesson resource page](#) for additional lesson materials. Featured articles are on [Asbestos in the workplace](#), the [Babine Lake Sawmill fire](#), the [Westray Coal Mines disaster](#) and an additional link to the [Day of Mourning resources](#) to commemorate workers killed on the job which includes a link to the [WorkSafe BC video on Matthew Bowcott](#), a young worker badly burned at his restaurant job. Ten additional videos are also found in the [History of Health and Safety in BC section](#).

BC Labour Heritage Centre <http://www.labourheritagecentre.ca>