



Commemorate Canada - Trade Unions Act

Overview:

In this lesson, students will learn about the Nine Hour Movement, its connection to the 1872 Trade Unions Act, and its lasting impact on unions and workers today. Students will learn about present-day unions and identify connections between workers in the past and present.

Time:

60 mins

Subject/topic:

History, Geography, Social studies

Grade:

9-12

Materials:

- Print or digital copies of *Canadian Geographic's 150th anniversary: the Nine Hour Movement and adoption of the Trade Unions Act*
- GeoMinute: [The Nine Hour Movement](#)
- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Devices with internet access

Learning goals

- Students will understand how the Nine Hour Movement in Canada led to the 1872 Trade Unions Act.
- Students will appreciate the impact of the Nine Hour Movement on Canadians today.
- Students will research the history and importance of an operational union in Canada.
- Students will consider multiple perspectives in regards to labour conflict.

Lesson Description

Minds on:

Students will reflect on how their life would be different if they spent 12 hours of it at school. They will learn the history of the Nine Hour Movement in Canada and its connection to the Trade Unions Act of 1872 by creating a historical timeline of the movement.

Action:

In groups, students will research one current union operating in Canada and will learn about other unions in Canada and their connections to the Nine Hour Movement. Students will consider multiple perspectives in regards to unions and their work.

Conclusion:

Students will reflect on if and how their understanding of unions has changed and consider other perspectives in the history of unions. They will revisit their timelines with the information they have about present-day unions.

Lesson Implementation

Minds on

Start the lesson by asking students, "How would you feel if the school day lasted from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.?" Ask students to think about all the activities they do after they leave school: sports, hobbies, socialising, relaxing, time with family, meals, etc. Write down students' answers on the board.

Explain to students that in 1872 Canadians had to work 6 days a week for a total of 70 hours a week. Most of the activities that we now enjoy after our work day would not have been possible in that time. The only day that Canadians did not work was Sunday, the Christian Sabbath. The idea of a shorter work day began picking up speed in Canada when, on June 14, 1872, the federal government of John A. Macdonald enacted the Trade Unions Act. This historic decision made it legal for Canadian workers to form unions in Canada. Explain to students that unions fought, and continue to fight for workers' rights, and have helped improve the lives of workers through things like better working conditions, shorter hours, and better pay.

Now, students will be learning about the Nine Hour Movement in Canada, a worker movement that led to the enactment of the Trade Unions Act. Students will be visualising the history of the Nine Hour Movement through a timeline. This can be done by hand or on a computer. If needed, remind students what a timeline is and how to create one. Encourage students to note important dates and events on their timeline. Suggest that students start their timeline at the decade of the 1850s. Encourage them to include what they feel is important. Where they end their timeline is up to them.

Individually or in their pairs, have students read the *Canadian Geographic* article [150th anniversary: the Nine Hour Movement and adoption of the Trade Unions Act](#) and watch [the GeoMinute: The Nine Hour Movement](#). Students can begin to add important dates and events in the Nine Hour Movement to their timeline. Students can also do more research using sources like the Canadian Encyclopedia's [Nine Hour Movement](#).



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Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework:

Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Patterns and trends
- Interrelationships
- Geographic perspective

Inquiry Process

- Interpret and analyze
- Communicate
- Reflect and respond

Geospatial Skills

N/A

Action

Now that students understand the significance of the Nine Hour Movement, they will have the opportunity to explore present-day unions. Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the following unions.

- [United Food and Commercial Workers](#)
- [Canadian Union of Public Employees](#)
- [Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions](#)
- [Public Service Alliance of Canada](#)
- [United Steelworkers](#)
- [The Professional Institute of Public Service of Canada](#)

Students will research who their union represents and the importance of this union to workers. Have students use the following questions to guide their research:

- What workers does the union represent and how many people are members?
- What is the history of the union?
- How has this union improved the rights of its workers?
- How might the workforce look different if this union did not exist?
- What other perspectives should be considered when researching this union?

Have groups share the information they discovered about their union with another group. What similarities and differences exist between the different unions? Groups can rotate until students have learned about the different unions assigned.

Conclusion and Consolidation

As a class, discuss what surprised or stood out for students while learning about the different unions and the Nine Hour Movement. Has it changed their previous opinion about unions and worker action? What other perspectives might need to be considered regarding worker demands?

Have students review their timelines completed at the beginning of the lesson. Ask how they would extend their timelines to include the new information they have learned about current unions. Explain that the work done by those in the past, including those in the Nine Hour Movement, has helped contribute to workers' rights today.

Extend your geographical thinking

- Students can research other important historical events in the labour history of Canada, such as the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.
- A mock debate can be held, with students taking up the roles of a union representative and an employer discussing an issue such as payment.



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Modifications

- Teachers can provide a timeline with important dates already included and have students fill in the event that corresponds with that date.
- A timeline can be completed as a class.
- The teacher can provide the important events to be included on the Nine Hour Movement timeline and have students put the events in the correct order.
- Research can be done as a class on one union.
- **Extension:** Students can map the history of the Nine Hour Movement on a blank map of Canada.

Assessment Opportunities

- Timelines can be collected to check for understanding.
- Students can exchange timelines for feedback.
- Student discussions can be observed and assessed.

Sources and additional resources

- The Canadian Encyclopedia: Working Class History
- The Canadian Encyclopedia: Nine Hour Movement
- Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions
- *Canadian Geographic*, 150th anniversary: the Nine Hour Movement and adoption of the Trade Unions Act
- *Canadian Geographic*, GeoMinute: The Nine Hour Movement
- Canadian Union of Public Employees
- The Professional Institute of Public Service of Canada
- Public Service Alliance of Canada
- United Food and Commercial Workers
- United Steelworkers
- Working Class History