



Lessons in Equity: Addressing history textbook silences on the Canadian women's labour movement through public art

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Abstract

This working paper explores the potential of using public art in history education to address the omissions of the women's labour movement in contemporary textbooks in Canada. Events of importance in Canadian history associated with women are either superficially mentioned or omitted completely in school textbooks and lessons due to the prevalence of narratives associated with nation-building, which are presented through a colonial, Eurocentric, and patriarchal lens. This study analyzed Canadian public art for themes that provide visibility to the efforts of women in labour movements in Canada. The theoretical framework guiding this study is public pedagogy, an educational theory that looks at teaching and learning outside of traditional educational institutions. Findings show public art has the potential to address the exclusions of the women's labour movement in current history lessons by providing an alternative visual narrative that is meaningful, relevant and memorable to Canadian learners. By addressing current textbook silences with the use of public art in school, educators can bring awareness to forgotten *herstories* and create a more complete understanding of important historical narratives that are currently not being taught in Canadian history lessons.

Keywords

Public art; history education; women's labour movement; public pedagogy.

