



11 TO 12

Trade and the Economy, Then and Now: The Postwar Period

The Post-World War II era has been marked by momentous developments in international economic conditions and in the scope and character of business operations. Economic growth, increasing affluence and the population explosion have generated enormous demands for capital and consumer goods throughout the world, while rapid technological process has greatly reduced the cost and speed with which products and productive resources can be transferred from country to country to satisfy such demands.

Technological innovation has also brought about the introduction of a multitude of new and complex products, thereby creating unprecedented opportunities for nations to specialize in production and to trade with one another. Substantial strides have also been made in reducing tariffs and other legal impediments to the international movement of goods, services, people and information. The growth of international trade and investment and the emergence of multinational corporations have resulted in more efficient utilization of resources and thus contributed significantly to economic progress and increased prosperity for the people of the world.

This lesson introduces students to key aspects of the Postwar Boom in North America and how the boom was experienced in the Prince Rupert region. Students examine select archival and historical sources and use these to inform a presentation on one of the main resource sectors in Prince Rupert during the late 1940s and 1950s.

The lesson, and its partner lesson, *Trade and the Economy, Then and Now: The Present Day*, are informed by the big idea of Interdependence.

CLASSROOM TIME REQUIRED

2 teacher-directed sessions of 45 minutes; 1 - 2 teacher-supported, student-led sessions (presentation research and development); 1 60-minute session for group presentations

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Understand in broad terms the economic, political and social context of the Postwar boom in British Columbia
- Compare and contrast trends in provincial, national and global trading patterns
- Evaluate factors that affect economic growth
- Identify the impact of the Postwar boom on the Prince Rupert region with respect to the region's key economic sectors
- Demonstrate applied learning by making and delivering a presentation on an issue affecting the Prince

Rupert economy 1945-1960 using a variety of communication tools

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A recording of a well-known 1950s pop song
- Advertising/consumer images from 1940s and 50s: [TV and Electronics](#); [Household](#); and [Transportation](#)
- *Postwar Boom in Canada Quick Facts* sheet (see *Attachments* below)
- 1945 NFB film [Gateway to Asia - Postwar British Columbia](#)
- Archival articles (these are available electronically through a university library – search by title to locate them):
 - *A Changing British Columbia*, E.H. Morrow, 1949, Quarterly Review of Commerce, Spring, 1950, no. 1
 - *The Development of the Port of Prince Rupert, British Columbia*, Alistair D. Crerar, 1951, Association of Pacific Coast Geographers, Yearbook, Issue 11
 - 3 Newspaper articles (to be bundled as one resource for Activity 4):
 - *Two Communities Challenge Seattle for Alaska Trade*, New York Times, April 20, 1947
 - *British Columbia Seeks DP's*, New York Times, June 22, 1947
 - *Big-Game Country of British Columbia*, New York Times, July 22, 1951
- Blackboard, whiteboard or large sheet of paper for recording students' ideas and contributions

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Computer and projector or a Smart Board to play student slideshow and NFB film and to share print resources
- Audio equipment to play pop song
- Optional: Sound recording equipment (such as digital voice recorders, computers/tablets and recording software/apps)

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Select and bring in a recording of a well-known 1950s pop song
- Set up computer and screen or Smart Board for student slideshow and for NFB short film *Gateway to Asia – Postwar British Columbia*
- Source, print and make sufficient copies of the archival articles – enough to give a copy of each resource to 1/3 of the class

CRITICAL VOCABULARY (see Glossary for definitions)

Capital goods	Factors of production	Standard of living
Closed economy	Gains from trade	Tariffs
Comparative advantage	Multinational corporations	Trade liberalization
Consumer goods	Open economy	Technological innovation
Demographics	Postwar Boom	
Economic drivers	Product innovation	

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Activity 1:

- As students come into the classroom, play a well-known pop song from the 1950s.
- When students are seated, ask them if they recognize the song and if they know the decade in which it was released.
- Facilitate a brainstorm session on the subject of the 1950s. What words, ideas, issues come to mind for the students when they hear the phrase “the 1950s”? Record students’ responses on the board.

Activity 2:

- Provide students with the urls for the 1950s Vintage Advertisements:
 - *TV and Electronics*: <http://www.vintageadbrowser.com/electronics-ads-1950s>;
 - *Household*: <http://www.vintageadbrowser.com/household-ads-1950s>; and
 - *Transportation*: <http://www.vintageadbrowser.com/transportation-ads-1950s>.

Working in pairs or threes, have students browse the site and select 3 images for each category that particularly appeal to or interest them. Tell students to note down the reasons why they were attracted to the images. Have students save their chosen images to a shared folder.

- From the shared folder, play a slideshow of the images the students have selected. At their desks, have students note their impressions of the images:
 - What kind of lifestyle is being conveyed/promoted?
 - What emotions are the images trying to inspire?
- Focusing on 3 – 5 images from the slideshow that between them illustrate aspects of domestic life, transportation and leisure, lead a discussion that supports students’ thinking, in broad terms, about the economic, cultural and social context/milieu of the Postwar Boom era in North America. Questions could include:
 - What kind of family and work life is being promoted?
 - What differences do you notice between this advertisement and the ones used today for similar products?
 - What conclusions might you draw from the images about the economic and social context of North America in the 1950s?

Activity 3:

- In pairs, have the students review the *Postwar Boom in Canada Quick Facts* sheet.
- Ask each pair to identify one fact that particularly surprised or interested them. Share with the class.
- As a class, brainstorm the connections between the facts and the commercial images in the slideshow. Support and check for students making the connection between the kinds of consumerism suggested by the advertisements and the economic and demographic factors outlined in the Quick Facts sheet.
- Record the brainstorm as a mind map.

Activity 4:

- Tell students that they are now going to explore how the Postwar Boom affected British Columbia and the Prince Rupert region by examining some archival materials – in the form of a short film and some print articles from the 1940s and 50s.
- You should alert students to some of the dated (and discriminatory) attitudes and perspectives towards certain groups of people in the archival resources and let them know that the class is welcome to discuss these attitudes. However, remind students that the focus of the lesson is to understand the economic context that the resources describe.
- Play the NFB 1945 film (10 minutes) *Gateway to Asia – Postwar British Columbia*. Lead a class discussion about the film, focusing on the messages it is conveying about BC’s “new” relationship with the Pacific Rim countries. Questions might include:
 - What shift in the importance/significance of British Columbia does the film convey?
 - What factors might be contributing to the economic growth opportunities?
 - What are the geographic locations of the growth opportunities?
 - How is the film’s message similar to today when we think of Prince Rupert as a Gateway to the Pacific? How is the message different?
 - What sectors of the economy does the film focus on? What do you know about the state of those sectors today?
 - What connection does the film make between the economic/industrial activity and the standard of living of British Columbians? Do you think all British Columbians enjoyed such a standard of living?
 - How would you describe the mood or tone of the film? What feelings is it trying to convey?
- Divide the class into small groups (3 or 4 students). Give each group one of the archival articles (it’s fine if more than one group has the same resource.) The articles are:
 - *A Changing British Columbia*, E.H. Morrow, 1949
 - *The Development of the Port of Prince Rupert, British Columbia*, Alastair D. Crerar, 1951
 - 3 Newspaper articles (bundled as one resource):
 - *Two Communities Challenge Seattle for Alaska Trade*, April 20, 1947
 - *British Columbia Seeks DP’s*, New York Times, June 22, 1947
 - *Big-Game Country of British Columbia*, New York Times, July 22, 1951
- Give students enough time to read the articles carefully. Ask students to:
 - Identify the key demographic, economic, political and social reasons for the growth in Prince Rupert at this time.

- List some of the challenges for the region with respect to taking advantage of the potential for growth.
- Give each group 5 minutes to report back to the class on their findings and observations.

ASSESSMENT

Student-Led Presentation

The student-led presentation provides an opportunity to explore these issues within the context of Prince Rupert's role in the local, national and international economy of the Postwar Boom years. Depending on the time available, students may focus their presentation just on the sources provided with this lesson plan, or they may conduct their own research to supplement and extend the information.

Presentation details:

- As representatives of one of the resource sectors (fishing, forestry, mining), students develop a presentation aimed at the City of Prince Rupert elected officials that:
 - Outlines why their industry requires more workers
 - Offers suggestions for how that need could be met (and what governments can do to help)
 - Describes the benefits of such economic growth to the people of Prince Rupert
- The presentation must:
 - Demonstrate a understanding of the main social, economic and political drivers of economic growth in the Prince Rupert region at this time
 - Demonstrate correct use of key concepts (see *Critical Vocabulary* above)
 - Be as appropriate as possible for the 1940s/50s time period in terms of content and format
 - Involve every member of the group in some capacity
 - Last for 8-10 minutes
 - Be supported by one (or both) of the following according to teacher/student preference:
 - A poster
 - A brochure
- If students would prefer, they may be given the option of replacing some of the oral component of the presentation with an audio recording. This may be an interview/interview(s) and/or a radio commercial.

MODIFICATIONS

- Support students' reading and analysis of the archival articles by providing them with specific guidance about which sections of the articles to focus on, or by providing them with an excerpt.
- Provide different options for the subject of the researched presentation. Possibilities suggested by the content of the articles include:
 - A presentation on the importance of First Nations' participation in the growing resource sectors and in the management thereof
 - A presentation on the need to balance economic growth and activity with protection of the natural environment

EXTENSIONS

Have students visit the Prince Rupert Archives to look at images of the city from the 1940s and 50s. Alternatively, have students search the online Archives database for images from the 1940s and the 1950s

Students could develop a slideshow presentation on the images they have researched.

LESSON PLAN RESOURCES

- Advertising/consumer images from 1940s and 50s: [TV and Electronics](#); [Household](#); and [Transportation](#)
- NFB 1945 film (10 minutes) [Gateway to Asia – Postwar British Columbia](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- BC Archives
- BC Stats
- International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development
- Statistics Canada
- Prince Rupert Archives
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) statistical data

ATTACHMENTS

- *Postwar Boom in Canada Quick Facts* sheet (see below)

POSTWAR BOOM IN CANADA QUICK FACTS

Key Facts:

- Canada's population nearly doubled between 1945 and 1975 (from 12.1 million to 22.7 million).
- Between the mid-1930s and the late 1950s, the number of babies born in Canada doubled. Approximately 227,000 babies were born in 1935, 340,000 were born in 1946 and, by the late 1950s approximately 470,000 babies were born per year. However, by the mid-1970s, there were half as many babies born per year than at the height of the baby boom.
- Between 1951 and 1956, the percentage of Canadians living in urban settings rose by 10 percent to almost two-thirds. The previous 10 percent increase in urbanization had taken forty years to accomplish.
- In general, surging incomes exceeded consumer prices and housing costs.
- The postwar period was characterized by many young, large families. These families fuelled the postwar suburban development boom. As a result, there was a surge in low-density, family-oriented housing.

Industry in B.C.:

- After the Second World War, strong international demand for resources initiated economic growth in B.C. By 1958, exports from B.C. made up about 14 percent of total Canadian exports.
- In 1949, the B.C. Government allocated \$90 million to provincial development, of which 30 per cent was dedicated to road and highway construction in the province. The new roads and railroad links did much to support and expand resource extraction in B.C.
- During the postwar period, the B.C. Government rapidly increased rural electrification. Previously, rural areas in B.C. did not have steady or reliable access to electricity.
- In the 1930s, over half of B.C.'s lumber exports went to Britain and one quarter went to the United States. By 1950, 84 percent of B.C.'s lumber exports went to the United States and about only 8 percent was shipped to Britain. By the 1950s, over half of the investment in the B.C. forestry industry came from the United States. Of all the resource industries in B.C., forestry underwent the most significant transformation.
- Between 1951 and 1971, B.C.'s electrical generating capacity increased from 950 to 2,600 kilowatts per thousand population.

Defining Characteristics of the Postwar Era:

1. Prolonged period of prosperity. The postwar economic boom can be attributed to high consumer demand and high rates of family formation and growth. Economic prosperity was also facilitated by higher wages, new social welfare benefits, and disposable income. Economic prosperity was also sustained by the United States' demand for Canadian resources, particularly mining, oil, and gas.
2. Prolonged population growth. Between 1945 and 1975, the number of Canadians nearly doubled (from 12.1 million to 22.7 million). This growth was largely attributed to the baby boom, but was also a result of large "waves" of immigration that begun in the late 1940s.
3. Extensive urbanization and suburbanization across Canada. These phenomena occurred at accelerated rates and in previously rural regions of the country. Urbanization and suburbanization resulted in the creation and growth of new infrastructure, including highways, boulevards, new town centres, new configurations of home and work, and booms in residential and commercial construction.
4. The establishment and growth of the welfare state. This included universal benefits such as unemployment insurance, family allowances, veterans' benefits, and generous old-age pensions.
5. A closer, more complicated relationship with the United States. This was reflected in the United States' increasing demand for Canadian resources, as well as in the prevalence of American cultural products (magazines, movies, television) in Canada.

Sources

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Miron, J. (1988). *Housing in Postwar Canada: Demographic Change, Household Formation, and Housing Demand*. Ontario: McGill-Queen's Press.

Owram, D. (1996). *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation*. Ontario: University of Toronto Press.

Rutherford, R.A. & Fahrni, M. (2008). *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1945-75*. British Columbia: UBC Press.

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