Great Western Garment Factory

COLLECTIVISM IN ACTION

A LESSON FOR 30-1 AND 30-2 SOCIAL STUDIES

GWG: PIECE BY PIECE

-A Resource for Alberta Teachers
Acknowledgements

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For more information on AFLE visit our web site at www.afle.ca
Comments regarding this unit can be sent to afle@telus.net

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The GWG: Piece by Piece—A Resource for Alberta Teachers

*GWG: Piece by Piece—A Resource for Alberta Teachers* includes projects, lessons, a video ballad and other supporting materials that document and explore the personal and working lives of immigrant women who worked in Edmonton's Great Western Garment (GWG) factory.

Included in this Resource:

*GWG: Piece by Piece—A Resource for Alberta Teachers* [www.afle.ca](http://www.afle.ca) (go to Teaching Resources, Aspen Teaching Units) includes individual projects and lessons for Grades 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 12 based upon the Alberta Social Studies curriculum. These projects and lessons identify Alberta Learning Outcomes, Learning Competencies, Key Concepts and Inquiry Questions for each grade. Lessons at the lower grade levels are cross-curricular, integrating drama, music, art, language arts and mathematics. Each project and lesson is based on a song or songs in the video ballad titled *GWG: Piece by Piece*.

*GWG: Piece By Piece* is a 60 minute video ballad, musical performance, with songs written by Juno-nominated songwriter Maria Dunn, audiovisual materials filmed and edited by Don Bouzek of Edmonton’s Ground Zero Productions and research interviews and archival materials provided by historian Catherine C. Cole. The performance features video footage of women who worked at GWG interwoven with songs inspired by their stories. The eleven songs in the video ballad can also be accessed individually. Each individual segment is about 10 minutes in length and features video clips of women being interviewed and one song that captures the essence of their experiences, thoughts, feelings, challenges and aspirations. Themes include:

- the pain and joy of leaving a home country for a new life in Canada, including the women’s tireless efforts to establish their families in Edmonton and provide their children with opportunities that they themselves didn’t have
- working conditions highlighting challenges of the physical working environment and positive collaborative experiences among workers
- the advantages related to English language education
- the union’s role in securing a better working environment
- the impact of Levi-Strauss’ decision to close the plant in 2004

Song lyrics for the video ballad are provided in *Appendix B*. We also recommend Maria Dunn’s 2012 CD recording of the songs from this project, titled Piece By Piece, available at: [www.mariadunn.com](http://www.mariadunn.com).

Catherine C. Cole has provided the basic history of the GWG factory and its workers, which serves as a comprehensive teacher backgrounder in *Appendix A* (see [Edmonton’s Great Western Garment Factory](#)).
The information helps teachers understand important historical events and economic factors that provide the context for understanding related themes and concepts. Many additional supporting video clips, archival photographs and teaching ideas can be found in the virtual exhibition *Piece by Piece: The GWG Story* [http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/exhibits/online/GWG/en/index.html](http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/exhibits/online/GWG/en/index.html) on the Royal Alberta Museum website. We also recommend Catherine C Cole’s book on this topic titled *Piece by Piece* [Cole, C. (2012). Piece by Piece. New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions].

*GWG: Piece by Piece—A Resource for Alberta Teachers* is freely available to teachers on the Aspen Foundation for Labour Education [website](http://www.afle.ca) under Teaching Resources.

**Overview:**

GWG: Piece by Piece—A Resource for Alberta Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>SS 4.2 The Stories, Histories and People of Alberta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Concepts</strong></td>
<td>Alberta Social Studies Learning Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stories communicated through narratives, oral songs, music, autobiographies, archives</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fairness (equity)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strike</td>
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<td>• Labour union</td>
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<td>• Inflation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Diversity of immigrants coming to Alberta</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Diverse groups affect urban life</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Chocolate Bar War: Story Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpreting the Stories of the Women of GWG: Readers Theatre</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>SS 5.2 Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Concepts</strong></td>
<td>Alberta Social Studies Learning Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Immigration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Primary sources</td>
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<td>• Secondary sources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Video ballad</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ethnicity</td>
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<td>• Working conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sweatshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stories of immigrants from India, Ukraine, Poland, Russia and Germany</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Effects of economic booms following world wars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Snapshot of Immigrant Life in Western Canada: Project-based Learning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpreting the Stories of the Women of GWG: Readers Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Chocolate Bar War: Story Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>SS 7.2 Following Confederation: Canadian Expansions</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Concepts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Alberta Social Studies Learning Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« Industrialization</td>
<td>« Identify the contributions of immigrants from Eastern Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« Factory system</td>
<td>« Examine the social and economic effects of the changing roles and images of women in Canadian society (i.e. working conditions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>« Cottage system</td>
<td>« Examine the emergence and contributions of large factories in Canada</td>
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<td>« Assembly line</td>
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<tr>
<td>« Piecework (specialization)</td>
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<tr>
<td>« Mass production</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Grade 9 | SS 9.1 Issues for Canadians: Governance and Rights |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Key Concepts** | **Alberta Social Studies Learning Outcomes** | **Project and/or Lessons** |
| « Collective bargaining/ negotiation | « Examine the emergence and impact of labour unions in market and mixed economies | Taking Collective Action: A Simulation Activity |
| « Labour legislation | |
| « Labour unions | |
| « Collective agreements | |

| Grade 10 | SS 10.1 and 10.2 Living in a Globalizing World |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Key Concepts** | **Alberta Social Studies Learning Outcomes** | **Project and/or Lessons** |
| « Globalization | « Explore political, economic, social globalization |
| « Labour unions | « Analyze impacts of globalization on women (gender issues, labour issues) |
| « Women in the workplace | « Analyze challenges and opportunities presented by globalization to identities and cultures |
| « Sweatshops |

| | | |
| | | |

Great Western Garment Factory: Collectivism in Action
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
<th>Alberta Social Studies Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Project and/or Lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>Explore factors that may influence individual and collective beliefs and values (gender, ideology)</td>
<td>GWG: Collectivism in Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective action</td>
<td>Examine historic and contemporary expressions of collectivism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour union</td>
<td>Explore themes of ideologies (progressivism, gender)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feminism</td>
<td>Analyze collectivism as a foundation of ideology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Explore opportunities to demonstrate active and responsible citizenship through individual and collective action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seniority</td>
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Great Western Garment Factory: Collectivism in Action
A Lesson for 30-1 and 30-2 Social Studies

Overview:

A mixed economy attempts to balance principles of individualism and collectivism. The belief that individual competitiveness, self-interest and economic freedom need to be tempered by collectivist values that ensure greater equality, fairness and cooperation provides the foundation of conservative and socialist ideologies respectively.

This lesson focuses mainly on how the principles of collectivism play out in reality. In it we examine a case study featuring the stories of women who worked for the Great Western Garment (GWG) Factory, an Alberta-based clothing manufacturer. The company existed in Edmonton (and some other Canadian cities) from 1911 to 2004. The case study highlights strategies the GWG’s unionized workers used to achieve greater economic and social equality. It provides examples of their co-operative achievements while showing collective interest and responsibility in action. It does so by highlighting the roles played by women employees who took leadership organizing for better pay, benefits and working conditions.

Teachers have various options for engaging students in examining collectivist principles and helping them understand how these principles influenced the company’s collective agreements and some Alberta government policies and legislation.

Inquiry Questions:

Social Studies 30-1 — To what extent are the principles of collectivism reflected in stories, actions and policies of Edmonton’s Great Western Garment (GWG) Factory?

Social Studies 30-2 — How are the principles of collectivism reflected in stories, actions and policies of Edmonton’s Great Western Garment (GWG) Factory?
Social Studies Learning Outcomes:

Knowledge and Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Studies 30-1</th>
<th>Social Studies 30-2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 explore factors that may influence individual and collective beliefs and values (culture, language, gender, ideology)</td>
<td>1.3 explore factors that may influence individual and collective beliefs and values (culture, language, gender, ideology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 examine historic and contemporary expressions of individualism and collectivism</td>
<td>1.4 identify historic and contemporary expressions of individualism and collectivism</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.8 analyze collectivism as a foundation of ideology (principles of collectivism: collective responsibility, collective interest, cooperation, economic equality, adherence to collective norms)</td>
<td>1.8 examine collectivism as a foundation of ideology (values of collectivism: collective responsibility, collective interest, cooperation, economic equality, adherence to collective norms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 analyze ideologies that developed in response to classical liberalism (socialism)</td>
<td>2.7 examine ideologies that developed in response to liberalism (socialism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 analyze the evolution of modern liberalism as a response to classical liberalism (labour standards and unions, protection of human rights, feminism)</td>
<td>2.8 examine the growth of liberalism (labour standards and unions, protection of human rights, feminism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10 explore opportunities to demonstrate active and responsible citizenship through individual and collective action</td>
<td>4.9 explore opportunities to demonstrate active and responsible citizenship through individual and collective action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skills and Processes

- engage in active inquiry and critical and creative thinking
- apply historical and geographic skills to bring meaning to issues and events
- use and manage information and communication technologies critically
- conduct research ethically using varied methods and sources; organize, interpret and present their findings; and defend their opinions
- apply skills of metacognition, reflecting upon what they have learned and what they need to learn
- recognize and responsibly address injustices as they occur in their schools, communities, Canada and the world
- communicate ideas and information in an informed, organized and persuasive manner
Great Western Garment Factory: Collectivism in Action

**Learning Competencies:**

- Demonstrate global and cultural understanding
- Know how to learn
- Create opportunities
- Demonstrate good communication skills and the ability to work cooperatively with others
- Identify and apply career and life skills
- Apply multiple literacies
- Innovate
- Identify and solve complex problems
- Think critically
- Manage information
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Engaged thinker
- Ethical citizen

**Time:**

- Opener – 40 minutes
- Learning Activity Option A – Collectivism in Action using Direct Instruction – one to two 80-minute classes
- Learning Activity Option B – Information Chart – two to three 80-minute classes
- Learning Activity Option C – Create Mind Map – additional 80-minute class(es)

**Materials:**

- **Student Learning Guide 1** – Rank Your Priorities – What pay, benefits and working conditions are most important to me?
- **Student Learning Guide 2** – GWG: Collectivism in Action – Information Chart
- **Student Learning Guide 3** – GWG: Collectivism in Action – My Mind Map
- **GWG: Collectivism in Action** [https://prezi.com/a7cf6vixzdyb/gwg/](https://prezi.com/a7cf6vixzdyb/gwg/) (the lesson’s complementary Prezi)
Key Concepts:

- Collectivism
- Collective action
- Labour union
- Feminism
- Benefits
- Seniority

Learning Activities:

**Opener**  Rank Your Priorities – What pay, benefits and working conditions are most important to me?

This ranking activity asks students to think about the pay, benefits and working conditions while considering their future ideal job or career. They will rank the ones that reflect their personal priorities (at this point). The activity will help students learn terminology and provide context for thinking about collectivism from a personal perspective. It should also motivate them to think about the value of non-monetary aspects of the work environment that lead to a better quality of life. We know that not all students know what their future job or career will be. If this is the case, ask them to speculate on their ideal job or career ten years from now.

The process of ranking priorities will raise questions for clarification and open up discussion regarding strategies for achieving desirable working environments and fair compensation and benefits. Ultimately, the activity will show how a collectivist approach can improve life for those who may not be able to advocate for these as individuals.

**Step 1**  Ask students individually to complete Student Learning Guide 1 Part 1 - Rank Your Priorities – What pay, benefits and working conditions are most important to me? (1 being the highest ranking and 9 the lowest).

You may want to:
- compile class results to get some general preferences OR
- have students focus on just their own choices

Have them briefly share their priorities with a partner or two.
Step 2  Provide time for them to individually complete questions 1, 2 and 3 on Student Learning Guide 1 Part 2 – Discuss Job and Career Related Ideals. Upon completion of the questions, take up the discussion questions with the class as a whole or in small groups.

The activity should show varying responses and priorities. Relate students' personal aspirations to future career choices. Acknowledge the changing nature of the business viability in a mixed economy. For example, prices of commodities in the energy resources or technology industries can be fluctuate. Labour legislation can change (i.e. minimum wage or cost of living allowances), long and short-term factors that can also influence economic conditions.

Learning Activity  Options for Collectivism in Action: GWG Case Study

The main learning activity shows the six principles of collectivism in action using the GWG worker’s experience as a case study. There are three ways to teach this lesson and time will be a factor in your choice.

1. Option A uses direct instruction and would take one to two 80-minute class with some follow-up suggested.

2. Option B will require two to three classes. It asks students to do some research and complete a chart that features the six principles of collectivism.

3. Option C goes one step further and asks students to create a mind map to show their understanding and analysis of the principles of collectivism. This could take several classes or homework.

Option A  Collectivism in Action using Direct Instruction

Use the Prezi titled, "GWG: Collectivism in Action” at https://prezi.com/a7cf6vxizdby/gwg/. It identifies the 6 main principles of collectivism: collective responsibility, collective interest, cooperation, economic equality and adherence to collective norms (Alberta Education, Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2, 2007). Use this strategy if time is at a premium.

Step 1  As the teacher, prepare yourself to present the Prezi, “Collectivism in Action,” by pre-reading:

- Appendix A – Teacher Backgrounder Edmonton’s Great Western Garment Factory
- GWG Labour Force on the Royal Alberta Museum website
- Appendix C – March 13, 1968: GWG opens $1-million distribution centre

Step 2  Begin by posting the Inquiry Question(s) for your class

Social Studies 30-1 To what extent are the principles of collectivism reflected in stories, actions and policies of Edmonton’s Great Western Garment (GWG) Factory?

Social Studies 30 -2 How are the principles of collectivism reflected in stories, actions and policies of Edmonton’s Great Western Garment (GWG) Factory?
Step 3  The Prezi titled “GWG: Collectivism in Action” provides each of the 6 collectivist principles, their definitions, examples from GWG and an analysis explaining how the principle is reflected in the example(s). Each includes pictures, a song and text. Stop the Prezi at various intervals for students to make notes or use a graphic organizer to record main ideas. To access the Prezi, go to https://prezi.com/a7cf6vxizdby/gwg/ or click on the title above.

Step 4  Follow-up the Prezi presentation by returning to the appropriate Inquiry Question for your class. You may ask students to write an answer to the inquiry question based on their understanding of the information provided in the Prezi. The sources cited in the Prezi provide more information to elaborate answers and do more research.

Option B  Information Chart

Step 1  Follow steps 1 and 2 above.

Step 2  Students review the information at Edmonton’s Great Western Garment Factory and GWG Labour Force and Appendix C – March 13, 1968: GWG opens $1-million distribution centre.

Step 3  Use Student Learning Guide 2 – GWG: Collectivism in Action – Information Chart and complete the chart using the information from the above mentioned sources. A Key for Learning Guide 2 is provided as a guide to possible answers.

Option C  Create a Mind Map

This option requires students to be creative. They will be in charge of the research, application and analysis that culminates in a presentation using a software program or handmade mind map. Use Student Learning Guide 3 - GWG: Collectivism in Action – My Mind Map.

Step 1  Review Student Learning Guide 3 – GWG: Collectivism in Action – My Mind Map. Follow the instructions and explain the rubric that is included.

Step 2  Ask students to read the information in Appendix A – Teacher Backgrounder Edmonton’s Great Western Garment Factory and GWG Labour Force from the Royal Alberta Museum website and Appendix C – March 13, 1968: GWG opens $1-million distribution centre.

Step 3  Provide time for creating the mind maps. You may need to offer tutorials depending on student knowledge of the software they select.
Step 4  Use the assessment rubric to provide formative or summative feedback. Provide time to feature their work or share it with the class as a presentation or on the class website.

Step 5  Return to the Inquiry Question(s) for discussion

Follow-up Activities:

1. **Follow-up to Learning Activity: Canada’s Political Parties – What are the ideological foundations?**

   Ask students to compare and contrast federal and/or provincial political party platforms. Which party reflects collectivist principles to the greatest extent? Which is most individualistic? Which policies provide evidence for your conclusions?

   Where do the political parties stand in relation to each other on the spectrum?

   ![Political Party Spectrum: Socialist to Conservative](image)

2. **Follow-up to Learning Activity: Feminism in GWG**

   Throughout its history, GWG employed mainly women as sewing operators. Most were immigrants. Initially, leadership in the labour union, the United Garment Workers of America (UGWA) Local 120, was male but this changed over time. Women began to assume leadership roles and take on greater responsibilities. What historical, economic and social factors influenced the changes that saw women gain greater equality? What are the underlying principles of feminism?

   Consider using a timeline to highlight benchmarks and then correlate these events to historic, economic and social changes. The You Tube videos featured in the Prezi provide testimonials from women that reflect the principles of feminism.
When I think about my future job or career – What pay, benefits and working conditions are important to me?

Assume that it is 10 years from now and you have landed your ideal job. You like the work. It is personally fulfilling and matches your skills and interests.

Think about this ideal job or career and rank the benefits you hope to have (with 1 being the most important and 9 being the least important). Also think about your responses in terms of whether or not you think you may be married, have kids or remain single?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pay, Benefit or Working Conditions</th>
<th>Ranking 1-9</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seniority</td>
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<td>Safe Working Conditions</td>
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<td>Vacation Time</td>
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<td>Overtime Pay (time and a half)</td>
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<td>Higher Salary/Wage</td>
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<td>Health/Wellness Plan</td>
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<td>Company Pension Plan</td>
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<td>Paid Sick Leave</td>
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<td>Work Time Flexibility</td>
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<td>Maternity or Paternity Leave</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Part 2 – Discuss Job and Career Related Ideals

1. In your ideal job/career, how will you characterize your employer (check one)?

- Private Business
- Public Employer (various levels of government)
- Self-employed
- Contract Worker (usually short term jobs with limited time employment)
- Other

Prepare to Discuss

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a government worker, employee in private business, self-employed or contract worker?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. When your work contract expires, how will you communicate your demands (pay, benefits and working conditions) to your employer if you are working:

   for a private business _______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

   in the public sector _______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

   as self-employed _______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

   as a contract worker _____________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

   other _________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Prepare to Discuss

Under what circumstances might it be better to negotiate with an employer as an individual? As part of a group such as a labour union?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
3. To what extent are economic considerations important to you in your future job/career? Why?

A Little

A Lot

Prepare to Discuss

The world of work is changing rapidly. What will be important to you in the future? What are your concerns?

What ideology will be most important to you, one based on individualism or one based on collectivism? Why? What will we come together to do?
Did you know that Edmonton was at one time a place where the coolest blue jeans in the world were made?

The Great Western Garment (GWG) Factory was in its heyday in the 1970’s. The company responded to a younger market by producing jeans that carried the highly coveted GWG label. In fact Wayne Gretzky provided a celebrity endorsement for GWG: "I grew up in GWGs."

Principles of Collectivism

This activity features a case study of GWG, a company that operated in Edmonton (and some other Canadian cities) from 1911 to 2004. The company’s history provides a chance to examine clothing trends, reactions to global economic forces, business policies, labour union activities and roles of immigrant women in shaping our modern mixed economy. The case study reflects collectivist principles in action.

Work with a partner to explore the virtual exhibition Piece by Piece: The GWG Story Royal Alberta Museum website http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/exhibits/online/GWG/en/index.html. Here you will find video clips, archival photographs and other information to help complete this activity.

Step 1 Use your textbook to write brief descriptions of each principle in Column 2 – What does this principle mean? Write a brief explanation of each principle.

Step 2 Use the GWG: Piece by Piece Time Line to find 2 or 3 historical facts or events that exemplify each principle. Click on each decade for more information. Insert the fact or event with its date into Column 3 – Example of the principle from GWG.

Step 3 Use Column 4 to explain how the fact you selected applies to the principle.

Step 4 Go to Royal Alberta Museum website at GWG: Labour Force to fill find out more about the union activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>What does this principle mean?</th>
<th>Example (and date) of the principle from GWG</th>
<th>How or why does this example reflect the principle?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-operation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Collective Interest</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Collective Responsibility</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Equality</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adherence to Collective Norms</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Property</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## KEY GWG: Collectivism in Action – Information Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>What does this principle mean?</th>
<th>Example (and date) of the principle from GWG</th>
<th>How or why does this example reflect the principle?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Co-operation</strong></td>
<td>The means by which the members of a group achieve their common goals.</td>
<td>Local 120 of the United Garment Workers of America (UGWA) is initiated in 1911. 1943 GWG workers lobbied city council for daycare.</td>
<td>UGWA was one of the first unions in Alberta and it began a tradition that saw workers demanding better wages and working conditions. The move to change from piecework to the quota system in the early 1990s.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Voluntary and open membership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Democratic control by members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Economic participation by members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collective Interest</strong></td>
<td>A group has a common set of interests that they pursue as a group rather than as individuals. The belief was that a group rather than an individual could more easily achieve common goals. This is the basis of the labour movement.</td>
<td>Local 120 of the United Garment Workers of America (UGWA) is initiated in 1911. 1943 GWG workers lobbied city council for daycare.</td>
<td>The union had to address many issues over time because work in the factory was noisy, dusty, hot and unhealthy. Wages were also bargained for and as a result immigrant women were able to make living wages and be paid more for overtime. They would have been unlikely to achieve these advances without being part of a union. The fact that other labour unions were urged to buy “union made” GWG clothing was a bonus for the company and probably a good reason they were relatively good with the treatment and compensation of their workers. “Management at GWG supported unionization because they wanted to use union labels on their products, in order to promote sales to other unionized workers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collective Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>The group is collectively responsible for the care of its members. The onus should not be on individuals to ensure basic care for others.</td>
<td>1943 UGWA lobbied city council for daycare. 1946 GWG supplies jobs to immigrants who were displaced in WWII. 1965 Vocational Training with the Department of Education to train workers to become skilled. 1966 Basic English language learning offered by the company.</td>
<td>The idea that women were limited in employment because of childcare responsibilities was beginning to surface as an issue. The concept of childcare is one that helps women achieve economic and social equality. GWG realized that helping workers train for higher positions and learn English was a key to higher motivation and worker satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle: <strong>Economic Equality</strong></td>
<td>Example (and date) of the principle from GWG</td>
<td>How or why does this example reflect the principle?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>The goal is to have relative income parity among classes, genders, abilities and minorities.</td>
<td>1922 Alberta establishes minimum wage for women. 1941 Women began to take higher paying jobs (i.e. cutters). 1943 Start of union presidents being women.</td>
<td>Because women proved to be able leaders and capable of doing jobs traditionally reserved for men, their incomes began to improve.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle: <strong>Adherence to Collective Norms</strong></th>
<th>Example (and date) of the principle from GWG</th>
<th>How or why does this example reflect the principle?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The group has authority to impose norms or standards as conditions of group membership. Individuals can be sanctioned for not adhering to group norms or standards.</td>
<td>1993 piece work changes to quota work. Workers had the right to make grievances (complaints) if they thought the terms of their agreements were not being adhered to. Workers who didn't have good English sometimes felt intimidated.</td>
<td>In principle, quota work was implemented to reduce stress and increase equality among workers. The move to change from piecework to quota work was not accepted by everyone. Some workers were very fast and they felt they could earn more by doing piecework. The union needed to address that issue and help members understand that it was in the best interest of everyone to ensure that all workers, regardless of speed, could expect equal compensation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Principle: <strong>Public Property</strong></th>
<th>Example (and date) of the principle from GWG</th>
<th>How or why does this example reflect the principle?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those who produce the goods/services should own the means of production. Workers will have a greater stake in their company if they own shares in it.</td>
<td>1961 Levi Strauss bought the majority of shares in the company. Workers who stayed with the company for 15 years were entitled to shares.</td>
<td>GWG was shareholder owned (private). They did sell shares to the public. <em>NOTE: the company was not owned by the government (public).</em> The thinking was that by giving the workers a stake in the company after 15 years of service, they would have a feeling of ownership in the company and therefore work more efficiently to increase profits. <em>GWG was not a publicly-owned company.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question(s) for Inquiry

Social Studies 30-1 — *To what extent are the principles of collectivism reflected in stories, actions and policies of Edmonton’s Great Western Garment (GWG) Factory?*

Social Studies 30-2 — *2 How are the principles of collectivism reflected in stories, actions and policies of Edmonton’s Great Western Garment (GWG) Factory?*

Your task will be to create a presentation that highlights the principles of collectivism: collective responsibility, collective interest, cooperation, economic equality and adherence to collective norms.

Get started by:

Reviewing the information from The Royal Alberta Museums virtual website title “Piece by Piece” Edmonton’s Great Western Garment Factory and go to GWG Labour Force and Appendix C – March 13, 1968:

GWG opens $1-million distribution centre

Complete Student Learning Guide 2 – GWG: Collectivism in Action

Create your Mind Map:

Use information from these sources to develop your mind map (i.e. bubbl.us or Mind Meister).

Include a legend to help the audience understand your categories, lines and symbols.

NOTE: Your teacher may show you an exemplar done by students from previous classes.

Assessment Rubric:

See the back of this handout to help you focus on the criteria you will be graded on. There are different rubrics for Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2.
GWG: COLLECTIVISM IN ACTION
My Mind Map
Assessment Rubric Social Studies 30-1

Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent 4</th>
<th>Very Good 3</th>
<th>Satisfactory 2</th>
<th>Needs Improvement 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collectivist Principles Identified and Defined</td>
<td>All six principles are insightfully identified and accurately defined.</td>
<td>All six principles are identified and clearly defined.</td>
<td>Most principles are identified and adequately defined.</td>
<td>A few principles are identified and may not be defined accurately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collectivist Examples</td>
<td>All examples are accurately and explicitly explained.</td>
<td>Most examples are clearly explained</td>
<td>Most examples are generally explained.</td>
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<td>The connection between examples and the principle is explicitly analyzed. Meaning is insightful.</td>
<td>The connection between examples and the principle is clearly analyzed. Meaning is clear and obvious.</td>
<td>The connection between examples and the principle is only adequately analyzed. Meaning is generally good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity, Visual Appearance &amp; Legend</td>
<td>Line, shape, color and images are exceptionally visually appealing. The mind map is easy to follow and legend is self-explanatory.</td>
<td>Line, shape, color and images are visually appealing. The mind map is easy to follow and legend is logical.</td>
<td>Line, shape, color and images are adequately shown; the mind map may be challenging to follow; legend is adequate.</td>
<td>Line, shape, color and images are not clearly evident or confusing; mind map is disorganized and hard to follow; legend is missing or confusing.</td>
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Comment

Total ____/16
### Assessment Rubric Social Studies 30-2

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**Comment**

**Total ____/16**
Edmonton's Great Western Garment Factory

Established in Edmonton in 1911, by World War II GWG was the largest workwear manufacturing company in Canada and, reputedly, in the British Empire. The company bought or built plants in Winnipeg, Brantford and Saskatoon. Levi Strauss & Co. purchased a majority interest in 1961 and the remaining shares in 1972, and closed the last plant in 2004.

1911 was a boom year for Edmonton. Real estate values were high and many new shops, businesses and houses were built. Alberta's first Premier, Alexander C. Rutherford, City Councillor and owner of the Alberta Hotel, Alfred E. Jackson, and Charles A. Graham, a former buyer and salesman with Revillon Dry Goods, established the Great Western Garment Company (GWG) on January 30, 1911, with a strong belief in the future of the young city. They also recognized the need for a supply of functional, hard-wearing clothing for the province's growing workforce.

The company's seven employees formed Local 120 United Garment Workers of America (UGWA) a few months later. The company quickly became a significant employer of women. There were few jobs available to women at the time; many employers would not retain married women, and single women had few legitimate employment opportunities.

Great Western Garment grew quickly, to more than 100 workers in its first year of operation. In 1914, the plant moved to 10438 Namayo Street (97th Street), Edmonton, to accommodate its growing workforce of 150 operators.

Early Expansion

From 1917 to 1953, the factory was located at the corner of 97th Street and 103rd Avenue. Originally constructed as a department store in 1911, the building was converted for use as a factory. By 1919, GWG employed 375 workers. Graham became president in 1920, and the following year Jackson and Rutherford ceased to be shareholders. Investors provided the capital necessary to build a two-storey addition to the north side of the factory in 1925, and a fourth storey addition with a metal mansard roof to the main building in 1927. Then, in the late 1920s, GWG moved its mackinaw and leather departments to “Factory #2” in a nearby print shop. Sales throughout western Canada grew to $1.4 million.

The Great Depression

Much of GWG's success can be attributed to Clarence D. Jacox, general manager from 1931 to 1941 and president from 1941 to 1958. Jacox instituted the line system and piecework incentives. The company survived the Depression through diversification, receiving City contracts to manufacture uniforms for city workers and clothing for people on relief. At the time, GWG produced more than 700 individual lines of garments, including women's wear and youth wear.

By 1935, GWG was optimistic that the worst of the Depression was over and introduced a prosperity program, increasing the number of workers from 250 to 300. After years of layoffs during slow periods, GWG celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1936 by committing to full-time employment for its staff.
World War II

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, two-thirds of the plant’s production was dedicated to government contracts. C.D. Jacox became president following C.A. Graham's death in December 1940, and ownership of the company was consolidated in the Graham and Jacox families. In 1941, the accumulated value of GWG's government contracts reached $1 million. The workforce grew to 500 people, manufacturing 12,500 uniforms per week, almost as many garments as it produced each year 15 years earlier. In 1942, a $125,000 two-storey addition was built to the east of the plant.

Postwar

In the early 1950s, GWG began to look for a new location near the 97th Street plant to accommodate operators who were juggling work and domestic duties. On December 18, 1953 the firm celebrated the completion of a new factory—a one-storey, 100,000-sq. ft. plant with a 70,000-sq. ft. sewing room—situated just a few blocks away. The reinforced concrete and masonry structure, designed by architect Ralph Brownlee, was arguably the largest garment factory on the continent. The number of employees increased from 500 to 750.

In 1957, GWG built a 125,000 sq. ft. addition to the new factory, further expanding its workforce. In 1958, C.D. Jacox died and was succeeded by J. Gerald Godsoe of Toronto. Jacox's death precipitated not only a change in management but, within a few years, a change in ownership.

Speed-up

Beginning in the 1940s, GWG used efficiency engineers to ‘speed-up’ the manufacturing process. Under Jacox, GWG had become one of the most highly engineered companies in the world, adopting new machinery and processes as soon as it could. By the 1960s GWG had full-time engineers who timed the operators and showed them how to expend less energy working in a circular motion, how to pick the pieces up, which fingers to use, and how to feed fabric into the machine. Where possible, operations were fully automated and the operators simply placed the fabric pieces in the correct position. By the time the plant closed in 2004, the amount of time it took to manufacture a pair of jeans was reduced to seven and a half minutes.
Levi Strauss and Co. bought 75% of GW in 1961. New owners Peter and Walter Haas joined the board, but GW retained independent management until after the company’s 75th anniversary in 1986. It was one of Alberta’s largest industrial enterprises, with 950 operators working day and night shifts, increasing production capacity by ten percent. Production jumped from 8,000 units a day in 1958 to 13,000 five years later.

GWG became the first company to partner with the provincial government and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) to train unemployed and underemployed people in 1965. Trainees were paid minimum wage, half of which came from the government.

Integration of GWG Plants within Levi Strauss

In 1968, GWG opened a $1 million 2-storey, 106,000-sq. ft. warehouse in the Strathcona Industrial Park in Edmonton, consolidating the storage and distribution of GWG garments produced at the Brantford, Winnipeg, and Edmonton plants.

In 1971, the Great Western Garment Company changed its name to GWG Limited. The following year, Levi Strauss bought the remaining shares of GWG Limited. Levi Strauss and Co. (Canada) Inc. was incorporated, and GWG became a wholly-owned subsidiary while continuing to retain its Canadian directorship with Russell Gormley as president and the head office in Edmonton.

In 1973, GWG established a cutting centre and storage facility, and a two-storey, 106,000 square warehouse in the Strathcona Industrial Park. GWG continued its efforts to modernize the company’s image by introducing a new logo, with stylized “GWG” letters in a broken circle, and by running the first national television campaign for jeans.

In 1978, GWG Limited and GWG (Eastern) Limited amalgamated under GWG Limited. Erwin Mertens became president of GWG.

In 1982, Great Northern Apparel Inc. (GNA) was established as a holding company for GWG Inc. and Levi Strauss and Co. (Canada) Inc. Fifty Edmonton-based office workers were laid off as GWG began to transfer management to Toronto. In 1984, 85 people were laid off at the Edmonton plant, and finishing for all clothing manufactured at Levi Strauss and GWG plants in Edmonton, Stoney Creek, and Cornwall was consolidated in Brantford. Some of the finishing workers from Edmonton chose to re-locate, along with the work, to Brantford.

Levi Strauss Management

By 1984, GWG’s workforce in Edmonton had declined from 1600 at its peak to 600 employees. The GWG name continued to be used until after the company’s 75th anniversary in 1986 when it introduced the marketing campaign “History in the Making,” capitalizing on GWG’s long history. Levi Strauss showed little interest in the GWG brand and, from 1998 to 2001, licensed it to Montreal manufacturer Jack Spratt. When this contract expired, Levi Strauss resumed production of GWGs in Edmonton and at the plant in Stony Creek, Ontario. Levi Strauss also introduced a new logo that featured the name “Great Western Garment Company” in a circle with the letters “GWG” in the centre.

Levi Strauss considered shutting down the Edmonton plant in 1999, when it closed 11 plants in North America, but in the end the plant was spared. Workers would remain anxious for their jobs when later that year 77 workers were laid off at the Edmonton plant, shifting production to Mexico.
Closure

When the Edmonton plant finally closed in March 2004 and 488 workers lost their jobs, Levi Strauss announced a severance package, career counselling, and retraining, as well as donations to local charities. Working with Economic Development Edmonton, they initiated the “Levi’s 488 Project” to help workers find new jobs. Unfortunately, many workers did not have the English language skills necessary to qualify for other jobs with comparable salary and benefits.

Conclusion

The closure of GWG was a significant loss to the city of Edmonton. Throughout its history, GWG was a very innovative company. In terms of management for example, before 1917, Local 120 was reputed to be the first garment manufacturing union in North America to gain the 8-hour day and 40-hour week; in the 1960s, GWG developed a unique inventory control system, working closely with retailers; and in 1965, GWG was the first Alberta company to partner with the government to provide training.

In terms of products, in the 1920s GWG was the first company in Canada to use pre-shrunk denim; in 1965 GWG introduced Nev’R Press, the first permanent press pants in Canada; and in 1972 Scrubbies, the original pre-washed jeans, were invented in Edmonton by then Vice-President of Merchandizing Don Freeland.


APPENDIX B

Lyrics to songs in the GWG: Piece by Piece video ballad

**GWG 2 Assunta’s Song**
© Maria Dunn, 2012

_During WWII, work at GWG was considered essential wartime service. Women took pride in making high quality, durable clothing to help the war effort. Assunta Dotto, who emigrated from Italy in 1939, described a spontaneous work stoppage in response to increased demands on the workers to make army uniforms._

Some measure the war in casualties, some the price of coal or bread
I measure it in bundles sewn and letters from the man I’ll wed
We all know someone over there, a husband, brother, son
We hope they get our uniforms, our stitches good and strong

Because of Mussolini, I'm enemy alien
And every month of this war, report to a policeman
I tell him that I’m working hard, I'm grateful for my pay
I want to make a life here and I hope they'll let me stay

I'm not asking much
I'm not asking the moon
All I ask is a living wage
For the work I do

I know that there's a war on, I would never just complain
But this new army cloth has only added to our strain
The fabric so unwieldy has forced our pace to slow
We cannot even earn enough to cover room and board

Chorus

I write my soldier every week, Italian still what I know best
Friends at work who teach me English never mock my awkwardness
Except for those I laugh with, I'd quit this factory floor
There’s jobs with higher pay—at least until the men come home

Chorus

Maria Dunn vocal, acoustic guitar, accordion
Shannon Johnson violin
Michael Lent upright bass
Jeremiah McDade whistle
GWG 4  **Speed Up**  
© Maria Dunn, 2007

*An exuberant call-and-response work song*

I’ll tell you how the work went – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
Not one second was misspent – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
My fingers nimble, face intent – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
I’d like to see you try it friend – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*

Now that I’ve gotten good and fast – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
They’ve upped the ante for my task – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
Each time I get ahead, they’re back – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
To raise the bar and stretch the slack – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*

Each extra inch seems like a mile – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
So bundles take a bit of guile – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
You snatch the small size with a smile – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*
It’s “head down” for another while – *Speed up, speed up, speed up*

Come weekend, it’s another race – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
Another job, another pace – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
Each dollar more a saving grace – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
To bring my family to this place – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*

My husband, I—we’re healthy, young – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
Still who knows what we’re running on – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
We pass each other the baton – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
When one comes home, the other’s gone – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*

Sometimes I need a little cry – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
All I do’s just scraping by – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
For making friends, there’s little time – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*
It’s ‘head down’ for another while – *Keep up, keep up, keep up*

Each pocket, seam and bottom hem
I’ve sewn for my children
I watch them grow, I know for them
It’s worth it all in the end
It’s worth it all in the end
It’s worth it all in the end

*Maria Dunn vocal  
Shannon Johnson harmony vocal  
Ojas Joshi tabla, udu, chanda, percussion  
Jeremiah McDade harmony vocal  
Chorus: Dawn Cross, Shannon Johnson, Jeremiah McDade, Terry Morrison*
Great Western Garment Factory: Collectivism in Action

Great Western Garment Factory: Collectivism in Action

GWG 5 Blue Lung

© Maria Dunn, 2007

Hauntingly commemorates a worker who died of lung disease

Inspired by the experience of Lillian Wasylynchuk who passed away in March 2009 at 71 years of age after a seven year battle with Pulmonary Fibrosis. Lillian worked for several years at the GWG clothing factory (1956 – 1963) and believed that her lung disease was caused by exposure there to the dust from the denim fabric.

Where I come from, we work hard, we don't make a fuss
So I can't be afraid of a bit of blue dust
When my family needs me to pay the bills
Maybe I'm not so ill

I see now from the photos, some women wear masks
And I can't help but wish that I'd done more than ask
But ours were the days when you did what you're told
You could only be so bold

If I could speak to my younger self
I'd say: “never risk your precious health”
Don't assume that they've thought of you
In your air of denim blue

Now if I had toiled in a coal mine
Where the earth itself compresses your time
Then maybe I'd think of lung disease
But a clothing factory?

Our fingers, our air, tainted blue
And someone joked that our blood must be too
But when the dust settled, I'm sad to say
It took my breath away

Maria Dunn vocal, acoustic guitar
Shannon Johnson violin

GWG 7 Sadat’s Story

© Sharmila Mathur, 2014

An instrumental piece underlying Sadat Khan’s story

Sharmila Mathur sitar
Ojas Joshi tabla
Great Western Garment Factory: Collectivism in Action

GWG 8  Shareholders’ Reel
© Maria Dunn & Shannon Johnson, 2012
Workers negotiate with management

Bigwig coming from Toronto
Sees a farm girl from Ukraine
Thinks he can intimidate me
Well he’ll have to think again

Every year he says we’re closing
Every year I call his bluff
Every year he’s crying poorer
So I thought “enough’s enough!”

I too own shares in this company
To myself I said “I’ll go and see”

Miles away from women working
Lining pockets with machines
Pleated pants, pinstriped suits
Deciding what the numbers mean

Hearty handshakes in the boardroom
Dividends—just divine
Another year of tidy profits
With a healthy bottom line

Bigwig crying from Toronto “we are stretched beyond our means”
“We must tighten all your belts or come apart at the seams”
“Take the cut, sign the contract, otherwise you’re out of work
Up ‘til now you’ve had a say, up ‘til now you’ve had it good”

“We must shrink our costs while making more pants”
“To raise your wage means dropping our plants”

Bigwig flying to Toronto, packing all his empty threats
Leaving us to once again, earn in peace our daily bread
Piece by piece, our daily bread

I’ve faced the bullies in the boardroom
Pleated pants, pinstriped suits
I’d like to see them tread one hour
In a fact’ry woman’s shoes

Maria Dunn  vocal, acoustic guitar, accordion
Shannon Johnson  violin
Michael Lent  upright bass
Immigrant Dreams
© Maria Dunn, 2012
This song discusses the working options for immigrant women

Some say it’s a sweatshop and why would you stay?
If you spoke better English, you’d be on your way
Too smart to be here, too poor to go
So you just stick it out for a month or so

Too smart to be here, too busy to leave
Weathering change in a tongue you don’t speak
And the pay here is decent, benefits too
So you just roll along for a year or two

And while you’ve been keeping your family afloat
The years have slipped by and you’re still in the boat
Rowing a sea of sewing machines
For your bread and your roses, your immigrant dreams

Some say it’s a sweatshop, relentless it was
But times have changed, so have the laws
From piece work to better than minimum wage
No more killing yourself for the money you make

From piece work to better than minimum pay
There’s more to your work than a quota each day
Encouraged to lead, your confidence grows
So rich meeting women from all round the globe

And while you’ve been keeping your family afloat
Years slipped by and you’re still in the boat
Rowing a sea of sewing machines
For your bread and your roses, your immigrant dreams

If it’s a sweatshop, where else would you go?
To a rest’rant? No pension, pay that’s too low
You’re better off home than part time in a store
All that effort, you get there, you’re back out the door

You’re better off home some husbands agree
Long ago when you went to GWG
You could write your own book with all that
you learned
Put your children through school with the money
you earned

And while you’ve been keeping your family afloat
Years slipped by and you’re still in the boat
Rowing a sea of sewing machines
For your bread and your roses, your immigrant dreams
For your bread and your roses, your immigrant dreams
For your bread and your roses, your immigrant dreams

Maria Dunn  vocal, acoustic guitar, accordion
Shannon Johnson  violin
Michael Lent  upright bass
Jeremiah McDade  bansuri
March 13, 1968: GWG expands with new distribution centre

The Great Western Garment Company (GWG) was an Edmonton success story. Founded in 1911 with 15 employees and eight sewing machines, it introduced the “needle trade” west of Manitoba. Fifty-seven years later, the denim and western wear maker had grown to be the largest clothing manufacturer in the British Commonwealth.

Its expansion continued on this day with the official opening of a $1-million distribution centre in Strathcona Industrial Park.

The new facility would serve the entire country, expediting the flow of goods from the company’s three manufacturing plants to consumers.

“This project is a fine example of the type of development our department is anxious to encourage,” A. Russell Patrick, provincial Industry and Development minister, said at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Throughout its history, the company begun by Charles A. Graham had been a major contributor to both the Edmonton and Alberta economies, he added.

The company’s slogan: “They wear longer because they’re made stronger,” reflected their target consumers — farmers and blue collar workers.

GWG provided clothing for the war effort in both world wars.

It was the first company in the 1950s to develop the stonewashed technique that made denim softer, further expanding its popularity.

By 1968, about 850 employees, mostly women, at the Edmonton plant alone helped produce the average of 20,000 garments manufactured daily by the company. Another 200 employees worked in administration, sales and business offices.

GWG’s most famous clothing line, Cowboy King authentic western-style rider pants and jackets, as well as men’s and women’s casual slims were made here.

The company was the largest employer of women in Western Canada.

Five months earlier, it had become the first Alberta industry to partner with the provincial Department of Education in setting up an on-site vocational training centre. Trainees were instructed in the operation of factory equipment, and received basic English instruction as many were newcomers to Canada.
By the time U.S.-based Levi Strauss had bought all of GWG in 1972, the latter held 30 per cent of Canada’s jeans wear market.

Competition from offshore factories whittled that market share to less than five per cent by the early 1990s. Efforts to make the brand successful failed and the Edmonton factory and all Levi-Strauss factories in North America closed in 2004. Four hundred and eighty-eight people employees lost their jobs in Edmonton.

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