

Implementing a Holistic Approach to the Study of War:

Challenging Collective Memory

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Teaching War in the History Classroom: Challenging the
Dominant Combat Narrative

Introduction

- I've been researching about the teaching of world war one in Ontario classrooms-I've spoken with teachers, observed my own students as teacher candidates in their practicum, and examined dozens of Ontario history textbooks in the OISE library and archives, all which reflect the complexities of teaching war. Most resources present war into short, sanitized and neutralized packages that focus on battles and technology through photos, short summaries, primary documents, maps, timelines and in some cases, games.
- The focus of the new history and social studies curriculum in Ontario centres on disciplinary concepts, historical thinking concepts and critical thinking pedagogy provide opportunities to teach war more holistically.

Portrayals of War in the Classroom

- Historical examinations within history course studies frequently frame the **history of war within a chronology** of battle dates, victories, and military action.
- The boundaries of historical inquiry in the classroom have meant that students are often only exposed to understandings of war that are supported within limited chronological parameters and compartmentalized subsections.
- The **inclusion of counter-narratives**, such as anti-war activism, the destruction of the environment and the lives of citizens, is often difficult to insert into this framework. And are often viewed as less important.

Strategies for Implementing a Broader Lens

- **Avoid 'heroism'**: the lives of everyday individuals and community-based achievement is just as historically significant
- **War blurs the lines between military and civilian populations** so why explore these topics separately?
- Include the voices of war resisters and the voices of Children and Families
- **Alter language** (terms are suggestive): "Total war" suggests unity. "All out war" suggests anything and everything can happen
- Explore the **impact of war on environmental degradation** – immediate/ multi-generational affects

More strategies

- ◉ Complicate the **binary structure** of historical narratives [Us vs. Them, Good vs. Bad]
- ◉ **Challenging notions of citizenship**
- ◉ Provide deep historical context, critique and analyze-include **multiple perspectives**
- ◉ **Avoid tokenism**: authentic inclusion involves questioning the standard cultural lens
- ◉ **Name the names**: avoid categorizations of people

- Acknowledge the **central role of the military industrial complex** in shaping national and international perspectives as well as supporting national commemorations of war.
- Integrate the **experiences of women** to reflect a historically accurate examination of their activism and participation.
- The voices of women are usually portrayed in supportive roles/fulfilling duties of good citizenship and good Mothers and as benefiting from war participation. Are there other positions?
- Women, Indigenous communities, 'Minority' cultures are embedded in local/ global histories

How to Connect to Historical Thinking Concepts in the Curriculum

Establish historical significance

Use primary source evidence

Identify continuity and change

Analyze cause and consequence

Take historical perspectives

Understand ethical dimension of
historical interpretation

Source: www.historicalthinking.ca

How to Connect to Critical Thinking Concepts in the Curriculum

Tc2.ca model for developing a thinking classroom focuses for teacher action:

- building a community of thinkers
- promoting critical challenges
- teaching thinking tools
- assessing for thinking

War is Complicated

History Textbooks portray war within simplistic themes and a division between

Combat and War work
(separate chapters examine the home front versus the war front)

Challenge Textbooks that suggest that war is Inevitable

● Textbooks chart “The Road to War”

1. Archduke is assassinated.
2. Austria sends ultimatum.
3. Serbia rejects.
4. Austria invades Serbia.
5. Russia mobilizes army.
6. Germany declares war on Russia.
7. France and Germany declare war on each other.
8. Britain declares war on Germany
9. Canada and the rest of the British Empire are at war!

Challenge the use of war games: Some are found in textbooks/others online.

UNIT 1 EMERGING IDENTITY, 1914-1918

History Game: Battle on the Western Front

GERMAN TRENCHES

GERMAN AIR PORT

NO-MAN'S LAND

CANADIAN AIR PORT

CANADIAN TRENCHES

Required to Play:

- game board
- pair of dice
- score sheet, pencil

Purposes:

- To become more familiar with the typical World War I battlefield plan
- To practice multiplication

Objective: To win the game by taking all the six strategic squares on your opponent's side of the game board (a bit like the game Battleship). You do this by landing a shell from your big artillery gun on selected numbered squares.

How to Play:

1. Choose a side. Either two or four people can play at one game board.
2. Take turns by rolling the dice and multiplying the two numbers on the dice. For example, if you roll a 5 and a 6, multiply 5×6 , which equals 30.
3. Find that numbered square on your opponent's side of the game board. For example, square 30 would take out one of your opponent's machine guns.
4. Record the square number and the weapon or command bunker taken.
5. When you score a hit, you also get an extra turn.
6. Note: When you roll two 1's your eliminate the enemy's big artillery piece and win the battle because the opponent can no longer fire at your positions.
7. Continue playing further rounds until your teacher indicates that time is up.

Follow-Up:

1. Examine the game board. How is it similar to some of the characteristics of the Great War?
2. What is your opinion of games that are about war? Why are they popular? How might they be harmful? How might they be helpful?

More Suggestions:

- Focus on **diverse perspectives**- competing visions of war before-during and after-and lack of support
- Warfare is the product of a wide range of **interrelationships**: political, economic and social, that exists in multiple layers.
- Explore **multiple and alternative narratives**- **question state classifications** of “enemy alien”
- Allow for the complexities of war to be explored. Avoid neat, summaries.
- Explore the ways in which wars affect societies, **institutional structures**

Where to find materials:

- **Community-based interviews, oral histories, first-person accounts**
- **Partnerships with public libraries, community centres, museums, local, provincial, university archives**
- **Seek out new scholarship: academic journals, new books, and attend conferences**
- **Research online:**
- **<http://www.thenhier.ca/>**
- **<http://tc2.ca/>**
- **<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca>**
- **www.collectionscanada.gc.ca**
- **<http://www.archives.gov.on.ca>**
- **<http://www.chashcaccommittees-comitesa.ca/ccwh-cchf/en/>**

War affects everyone.

War work required to support the trenches

- Military Uniforms (clothes, boots, etc)
- Food and water
- General supplies
- Medical supplies
- Support staff for all procedures
- Medical support staff
- Transportation (all)
- Other....

Links between Farm Service Corps/Munitions Factory work and combat



[Lois Allen Camp in Winona On 1918, NLA, MG 30-C173] Women work inside a Northern Electric Co. Ltd. factory in Montreal, Que. during the First World War. (Library and Archives Canada/Canadian Press)

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Links between making and wearing uniforms for combat



WATCH YOUR GUESSIE MIND
Photograph by Western Newspaper Union

MAKING TOMMY'S UNIFORM

SG505 : At the Hall of the Royal Army Clothing Factory, Fimlice, London, a corps of women working with modern machinery are able to keep a whole army division clothed. The efficient system, and the working conditions at this factory are admirable in every way. Photo shows woolen jerseys being inspected



Canada at War
www.canadaatwar.ca

Links between medical support & field hospitals & the battlefield



25. No. 2 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. Officers and nursing sisters outside one of their marquees at Rémy Siding, Poperinghe.



The Diversity of Women's Contributions to the War Effort

[Red Cross ambulance, Toronto Archives Fonds 1244 item 885] & French Field Hospital

Grace MacPherson as a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) driver for the British Red Cross on June 8, 1917. This photograph and others were taken for the Canadian War Photographs exhibition at the fashionable Grafton Galleries in central London, and appeared on the front page of *The Canadian News Record*, which was published by the War Records Office. Library and Archives Canada/Department of National Defence collection/PA-001305.



Red Cross ambulance
Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 885.

Nursing sisters overseas



Postcarddepot

www.delcampe.net

Rationing: not everyone supports the consequences

WAR MEALS



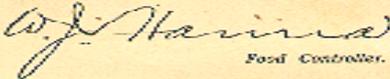
**PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO SAVE BEEF, BACON,
WHEAT AND FLOUR TO MEET THE
WAR-NEEDS OVERSEAS.**

TO CANADIANS.

In the armies and civilian populations of the allied nations we need all the wheat, beef, pork and bacon that Canada can supply. **These things we can and must do with this war-time war-time conditions. WE MUST PRODUCE ALL WE CAN, MAKE NOTHING, AND MEET OUR CONSUMPTION, as much as possible, FROM WHEAT, FLOUR, BEEF AND BACON AND OTHER FOODS.** The other foods are not as wholesome for us but are not as suitable for shipment overseas to our allies.

Every man and woman in Canada should do their share of this necessary war service. It does not call for wealth. It does require earnest, intelligent, diligent thinking and action, sustained by the conviction that it is necessary, that it will help to win the war, and that it will do us good individually and collectively.

Think and urge the co-operation of every citizen. Do your best to save every bit of food.


Food Controller.

Ottawa, August 13, 1917.

ISSUED BY THE FOOD CONTROLLER FOR CANADA.

OTTAWA
J. DE LABROQUERIE TACHE
PRINTER TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY
1917

24122-1

Long term impact of Internment camps in Canada



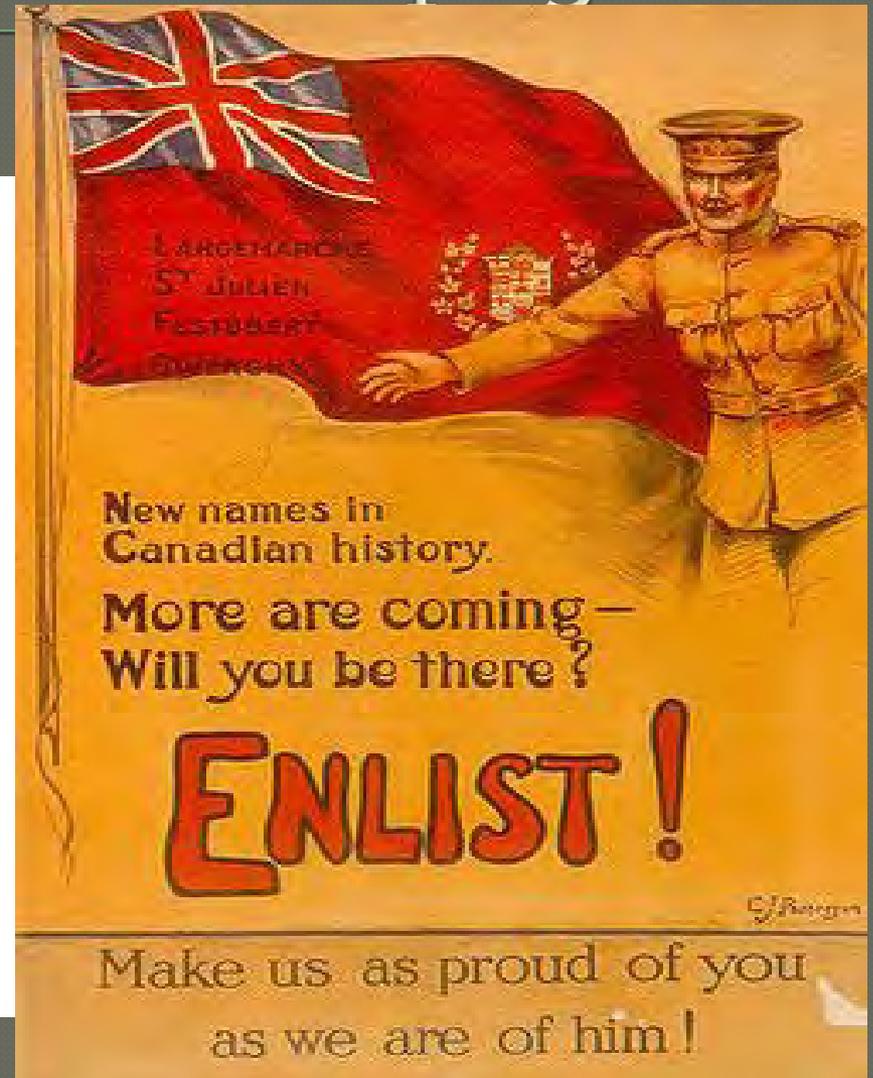
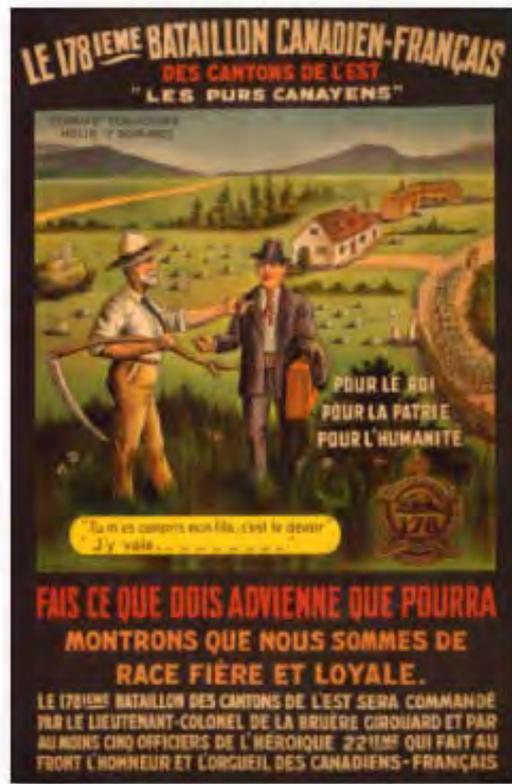
[Women, Children and men in Sprit Lake
Internment Camp Quebec, NLA, PA 170 620]
Fine-Meyer 2014

Hard labour for internees at the Kapuskasing camp, circa 1917.

(Photo courtesy of the Ron Morel Museum and Glenbow Museum)



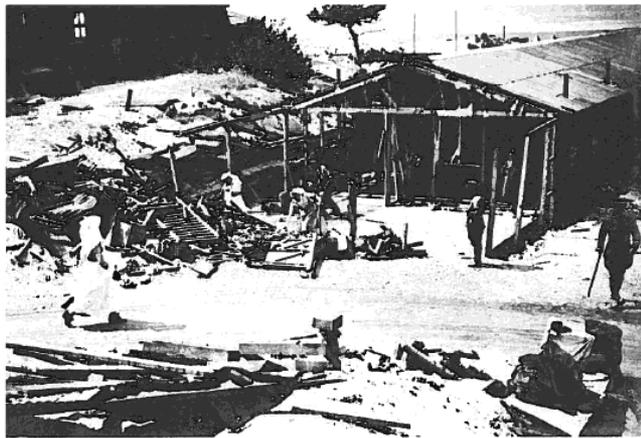
Long term impact of Propaganda



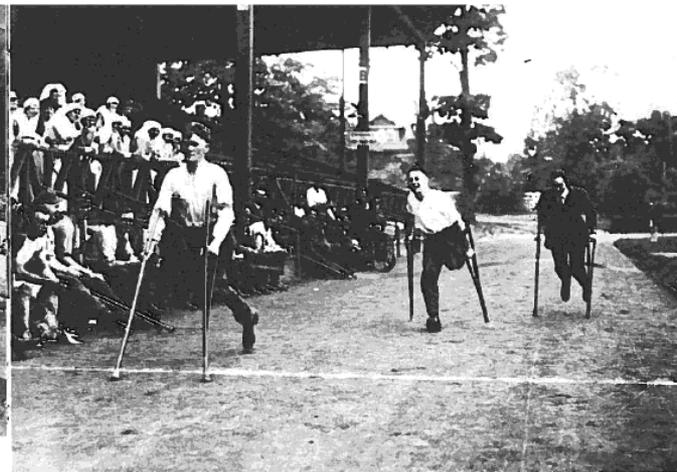
Victory?: Human and Environmental Consequences

Veterans in Christie Street Hospital, Toronto

[Canada's Nursing Sisters by G.W.L. Nicholson, Toronto, 1975]



30. Bombing at Etaples. The demolished wing of the nursing sisters' quarters, No. 1 Canadian General Hospital, after the air raid of May 19, 1918.



32. Caring for veterans. After the First World War many nursing sisters joined the staffs of hospitals for veterans. Here, nurses at Christie Street Hospital, Toronto, watch a race for handicapped patients in 1919.

31. Armistice Day in Valenciennes. Nursing sisters of No. 4 Canadian C.C.S. with citizens of the newly-liberated Belgian city.



33. Mrs. Eva Coghill, the first president of the Ontario Branch of the

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

<http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2013/03>

Summarizing key details from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Report (2013)

- **World military expenditure in 2012 is estimated to have reached \$1.756 trillion**
- **The total is higher than in any year between the end of World War II and 2010**
- **This corresponds to 2.5 per cent of world gross domestic product (GDP), or approximately \$249 for each person in the world**
- **In 2012 the Canadian government spent \$22 billion on the Department of National Defence and \$1 billion on Environment Canada. (vowpeace.org)**