Before and after World War I, Canada tried to attract immigrants to settle the West and build the country’s economy. Advertisements, such as the poster on this page, offered free or cheap land. These ads promised prosperity and abundance, but the reality was somewhat different. Non-British immigrants were often labelled “aliens” and treated with suspicion. And open discrimination, such as the sign warning Jews to stay out of Ste-Agathe, Quebec, reminded some groups that they were not welcome in some communities.

Figure 7-1 Before and after World War I, Canada tried to attract immigrants to settle the West and build the country’s economy. Advertisements, such as the poster on this page, offered free or cheap land. These ads promised prosperity and abundance, but the reality was somewhat different. Non-British immigrants were often labelled “aliens” and treated with suspicion. And open discrimination, such as the sign warning Jews to stay out of Ste-Agathe, Quebec, reminded some groups that they were not welcome in some communities.
In the early 20th century, the heritage of more than half of Canadians was British. The second-largest group was French. The government tried to reinforce Canada’s British character by attracting immigrants from Britain.

But the need for settlers to fill the Western provinces prompted recruiters to expand their efforts to include Western and Eastern Europe. As a result, people arrived from Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and other non-English-speaking European countries. Significant numbers of Jews and Chinese people also arrived. But many people in these groups did not find Canada entirely welcoming. At times, members of these groups experienced open discrimination.

The images on the previous page show the contrasting realities that existed in Canada in the years after World War I. Examine the images and respond to the following questions:

- What kind of society is portrayed in the Canadian National Railways poster? What elements of the poster create this message?
- What does the poster suggest about who was welcome in Canada?
- What kind of society is portrayed by the sign in Ste-Agathe, Quebec?
- How might this discrimination have affected relationships among the various groups within Canadian society?
- What conclusions, if any, do these images help you reach about Canadians’ commitment to social justice during this period?

**To what extent did Canadian society respond appropriately to individuals and groups?**

**Key Terms**
- reserves
- enfranchised
- urbanization
- push and pull factors
- pacifism
- anti-Semitism
- child labour

**My Canadian History Journal**

Consider the two images on the previous page and your current understandings. Then comment on what life in Canada was like for people whose heritage was not British. As you progress through this chapter, add notes that change or expand on your ideas.

Date your comments and keep them in a format that you can return to as you progress through the unit.
What government actions affected specific groups in Canada?

After World War I, Canadian society started to change.

- Veterans of World War I returned home with different expectations.
- Immigrants from across Europe brought their own cultural traditions and languages.
- Some women, who now had the right to vote and the experience of working outside the home, began to seek social, economic, and political equality.
- Ties to Britain began to weaken at the same time as American social and economic influences grew.
- More and more rural Canadians moved to urban centres.
- Modern conveniences, such as electrical appliances and the telephone, began to change the daily lives of Canadians.

These changes affected the Canadian economy, social structures, institutions, and political parties, as well as relationships among groups within society. Though many of these changes were welcome, not all groups benefited. Both Aboriginal people and Quebec francophones, for example, struggled to make their voices heard.

First Nations and the Indian Act

In the late 19th century, attempts to settle the Western United States had sparked violence between settlers and First Nations who tried — unsuccessfully — to keep settlers from taking over their territory. The Canadian government wanted to attract settlers to Western Canada, but it also wanted to avoid similar clashes.

So the government encouraged Western First Nations, such as the Siksika and Cree, to sign treaties that offered some benefits in return for giving up most of their land. First Nations were granted reserves — land set aside for their exclusive use. Then, in 1876, Parliament passed the Indian Act, which gave the government nearly complete control over the lives of First Nations people on reserves.

The act defined who was a “status Indian” and therefore eligible to receive the benefits promised in treaties. Benefits included government-funded health care and education. But the act took away First Nations people’s right to govern themselves, as well as their right to vote. The act also restricted how First Nations people earned a living, required them to ask permission to leave their reserve, and prohibited them from consuming alcohol.

On each reserve, a government-appointed Indian agent controlled people’s day-to-day activities.
**ASSIMILATION**

The goal of the Indian Act was to assimilate First Nations people into the broader Canadian society. Over the years, Parliament changed the act several times — without consulting First Nations people.

For First Nations, the treaties were binding contracts. But governments and the courts viewed the treaties as promises, which the government was not bound to keep.

Many of the reserves were too small for First Nations to carry on traditional activities. In addition, budget cuts in the federal Department of Indian Affairs reduced services. And government officials decided that the annual benefits promised in treaties discouraged First Nations people from finding jobs. So these payments were reduced and made only grudgingly.

At the same time, rules limiting economic activities meant that few jobs were available on reserves, so unemployment was high. Housing on reserves was usually primitive, lacking running water and indoor toilets. Poor health care and infectious diseases also took a toll. Poverty meant that children were undernourished, and suicide rates jumped.

As a result, the quality of life on reserves declined. In 1500, about 500,000 First Nations people had lived in Canada. By the early 1920s, the number of status Indians had been reduced to about 100,000.

**THE LEAGUE OF INDIANS OF CANADA**

Many First Nations people from across Canada had fought during World War I. The war had brought some of them together in Europe, and many found that their concerns were similar. Some hoped that their war record would persuade the government to correct the wrongs that had been done and to grant them the same rights as other citizens.

But when they returned home, they found that little had changed. Many First Nations veterans were denied the benefits that were available to non-Aboriginal veterans. And some First Nations were forced to give up reserve land so the government could offer it to non-Aboriginal veterans who wanted to farm.

As a result, some First Nations people decided that it was time to make their voices heard. Fred Loft, a Mohawk from the Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve in Ontario and a war veteran, was a key figure in this movement. In 1919, Loft helped found the League of Indians of Canada, which was modelled on the League of Nations.

But government officials viewed Loft’s efforts with suspicion and worked actively to undermine the league. In 1927, for example, changes to the Indian Act made it illegal for First Nations to form political organizations. As a result, the league never attracted widespread support.

When Loft died in 1934, the organization faded away. Still, this early attempt at organizing a national voice for First Nations people laid the foundation for the Aboriginal groups of the future.
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

One of the main advocates of assimilation was Duncan Campbell Scott, who rose through the ranks to lead the Department of Indian Affairs from 1923 to 1939.

Scott, who was also a well-known poet, told a parliamentary committee in 1920: “I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone . . . Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.”

Scott believed that education was the key to assimilation. Many First Nations children already attended school, but in 1920, Parliament changed the Indian Act and required all children between the ages of 7 and 15 to go to school. For many, this meant travelling hundreds, and even thousands, of miles from home.

The goal of the schools was to “civilize” the children so that they would fit into Canadian society. English was the language of instruction, and children were not allowed to speak their first language. Because most of the schools were run by churches, Christian religious values were emphasized, while Aboriginal spirituality was condemned.

Children were separated from siblings and friends and housed in dormitories. Teachers were often harsh, and sometimes even cruel. In many schools, students were required to do housework or manual labour to reduce the institution’s operating costs.

By 1931, 80 residential schools were operating across Canada. Over the years, an estimated 150,000 Aboriginal students attended these schools.

THE LEGACY OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Separated from their family for long periods, many students lost touch with their culture. They could not speak the language of their parents and grandparents and did not learn traditional ways. In addition, some children suffered physical and sexual abuse.

Graduates of residential schools could become enfranchised — qualified for citizenship rights, including the right to vote — but this meant giving up their Indian status. In 1920, a change to the Indian Act made it possible for graduates to be enfranchised even if they did not request or agree to it.
Residential Schools

Non-Aboriginal Canadians often congratulated those who ran residential schools for their efforts to “improve” society. But the children who attended the schools often had different views. Here are three people’s perspectives on residential schools.

In a 1911 editorial, F.J. Deane, editor of the Cranbrook Herald, expressed admiration for the work being done at the St. Eugene Mission, a newly built residential school near Cranbrook, British Columbia.

It acts as a sort of balm to the conscience . . . to see for oneself the wise and sincere efforts being made by the Roman Catholic church to improve the mental and moral condition of the youth of these aboriginal tribes. That this work is, on the whole, successful cannot be questioned. A glimpse at the gathering of healthy, cleanly well-dressed Indian boys and girls assembled on this occasion, fully established that fact . . . [I]t may be accepted as unquestionable that the training given these Indian children has a permanently beneficial effect upon their characters.

Many years after her time at the Blue Quills Residential School in Alberta, Madeleine Dion Stout, whose Cree name is Kêtêskwêw, recalled the pain of being separated from her family.

I remember my mother and father coming to visit us and watching my mother disembark from the wagon wearing the red tam that made her so striking and unforgettable.

I would start missing my mother from the time she arrived, knowing she would slip away from me with each passing moment of the visit . . .

For a young child, residential school didn’t make much sense . . . in there; you were mainly shut up, shut out, and shut down. You didn’t really have a voice, you weren’t really heard, and you were shut down emotionally because it was too hard to feel.

In April 2008, Phil Fontaine, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations and a residential school survivor, wrote an open letter responding to a federal government promise to issue an apology for the harm done by residential schools.

There must . . . be a clear and unequivocal recognition in the apology that the primary objective of the residential school policy was assimilation founded on racist premises — premises of inferiority, disrespect, discrimination and inequality — premises which were used to justify the attempted destruction of our very identity and that this was profoundly wrong.

Explorations

1. Create a chart to compare these three primary sources. Your chart should include the following questions:
   - In what context was the primary source created?
   - What were the creator’s point of view and purpose?
   - What does the source reveal about the creator’s values and worldview?

2. If you planned to include one of these sources in your response to the challenge for this unit, which would you choose? Explain your reasons.

- What new evidence about its historical setting does the source provide?
- What further evidence would you need to assess the validity of the creator’s point of view?
NATIONALISM IN QUEBEC

While Aboriginal people fought assimilation policies, Quebec francophones were struggling to understand their position in Canada. The 1917 conscription crisis had left a legacy of bitterness that many francophones would not quickly forget.

Many Québécois were also concerned about trends that were changing traditional Quebec francophone society. Since the end of World War I, more and more francophone young people had moved from rural areas to towns and cities, such as Montreal. There, they found jobs in rapidly expanding businesses and industries.

Some francophone leaders feared that this urbanization was undermining the traditional values that had supported the French culture and language. In addition, many of the developing businesses were financed by money from anglophone Canadians and the United States. As a result, English was becoming the dominant language of business and trade. This fuelled francophones’ worries about the future of the French language.

Compare the statistics in Figure 7-4 with recent statistics on the percentage of francophones in Canada (p. 34). Do these statistics suggest that francophone concerns about their language were justified? Explain your response.

LIONEL GROULX

Lionel Groulx, a prominent Quebec thinker and Catholic Church leader, was one of the main voices expressing francophone concerns. Groulx believed that francophone Québécois culture was strongly linked to the Catholic faith; in his view, to be a francophone Québécois was to be a Catholic. If francophone Québécois culture and language were to survive, Groulx believed, the link to the Catholic Church must be maintained. Anglophone and American influences, as well as urbanization and industrialization, were threats that should be resisted.

During the Depression, many rural Québécois experienced hard times, and some blamed the province’s anglophone, and largely urban, minority for their problems. In this atmosphere, many francophone Québécois were attracted to Groulx’s ideas, which helped reinforce their identity and gave them hope for a more prosperous future.

But at the same time, Groulx also expressed strong anti-Jewish views and opposed all non-Catholic immigration to Canada. These views made him a controversial figure, and many believe that his vision of Quebec nationalism was tainted.
THE UNION NATIONALE

Concerns about maintaining francophone culture in Quebec contributed to the founding of the Union Nationale in 1935. The party drew its strongest support from rural Quebec, and many of its policies focused on preserving traditional rural ways of life.

When the party won the 1936 provincial election, Maurice Duplessis became premier and his government introduced farm credit programs to help struggling farmers. Drawing on some of Lionel Groulx’s ideas, the party allied with the Catholic Church to resist outside influences and protect what party members viewed as traditional Quebec values. To this end, the Union Nationale provided funds to the Catholic Church to run education, health care, and social services in the province.

At the same time, Duplessis opposed organized labour. His government passed laws that obstructed unions, and strikes were frequent during his years in power. Duplessis responded to the strikes with force, using the provincial police to break up picket lines and keep order.

The Union Nationale also tried to stamp out dissenting ideas. In 1937, for example, Duplessis’s government passed what was often called the Padlock Law. This law gave police the right to seize for up to a year any premises used by people the government considered a threat. The Communist Party was one organization targeted. The law also allowed the government to jail anyone found guilty of preparing materials that threatened public order.

RECALL . . . REFLECT . . . RESPOND

2. The Assembly of First Nations has condemned Canada’s assimilation policies as a form of cultural genocide—the deliberate destruction of a people’s or nation’s language, culture, and traditions. Work with a partner to develop arguments that could be used to support one of the following positions:
   a) The Indian Act was an instrument of cultural genocide.
   b) The Indian Act was not an instrument of cultural genocide.

   Compare your ideas with those of another pair.
3. Identify two historically significant forces that contributed to the rise of Quebec nationalism after World War I and into the 1930s. Then think back to what you learned about Quebec nationalism in Unit 1. Do these forces remain important factors in Quebec nationalism today? Explain your response.
**What challenges and opportunities were created by immigration?**

Before World War I, the Canadian government had actively recruited immigrants. About three-quarters of the more than 2.5 million immigrants to Canada between 1896 and 1914 had come from Britain and the United States. Most of the rest had come from European countries, including about 150 000 from Ukraine.

Immigration is affected by **push and pull factors**. Push factors are conditions, such as poverty, lack of political or religious freedom, and famine, that persuade people to leave their homeland. Pull factors are possibilities that exist in the place people are going to and may include the chance of a better life, as well as political and religious freedom.

In some European countries, for example, nationalism had led to persecution of some ethnic groups, such as Jews and Armenians. Meanwhile, advertising campaigns promised loans for passage and farmland for those who wanted to immigrate to Canada. Groups fleeing religious persecution, such as the Doukhobors and Mennonites of Russia, were attracted by the relative religious freedom in Canada.

**Government Policies**

Many of the restrictive government policies that had led to the internment of “enemy aliens” during World War I continued afterwards. As Canadian soldiers returned home and unemployment increased, new immigration policies denied entry to more people. Among those barred were people from countries that had sided with the Central Powers, those who were illiterate or who held socialist or communist beliefs, and people who had “peculiar customs, habits, modes of life, and methods of holding property.”

But as the economic situation improved in the 1920s, railway and steamship companies persuaded the government to loosen restrictions on immigrants from Europe. This changed again as the Depression worsened in the 1930s. The government cancelled railway company recruitment of immigrants, and those who had arrived during the 1920s were threatened with deportation if they applied for government relief.

At the time, no separate category existed for refugees. People seeking refuge from persecution were treated the same way as other immigrants.

** Voices **

I think a stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children, is [a] good quality [immigrant].

— Clifford Sifton, former minister in charge of immigration, in an interview, 1922

** CheckBack **

You read about the classification of immigrants as enemy aliens in Chapter 5.

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**Figure 7-7** Immigration to Canada, 1914–1938

- **A** 1914–1918 — World War I
- **B** 1917–1918 — Russian Revolution
- **C** 1918–1919 — Spanish influenza pandemic
- **D** 1919 — Mussolini founds Fascist Party in Italy
- **E** 1922–1939 — The Great Depression
- **F** 1932–1933 — Famine in Ukraine
- **G** 1933 — Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany
- **G** 1935 — Passage of anti-Semitic Nuremberg Laws in Germany

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**CHECK FORWARD**

You read about the classification of immigrants as enemy aliens in Chapter 5.

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**CHECK BACK**

You read about the classification of immigrants as enemy aliens in Chapter 5.
IMMIGRANTS WHO WERE WELCOMED

After World War I, the federal government created the Department of Immigration and Colonization and set out to attract British immigrants, especially farmers who had the skill and temperament to be successful on the Prairies. White Americans were also welcomed.

At the time, much of the available Prairie farmland was owned by the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railways. Both companies launched advertising campaigns in Britain, often using materials that showed well-established communities with schools, churches, railway stations, and roads. British immigrants could borrow money from the railways to pay for their passage and to buy land. They could even buy houses and barns from the railway companies.

In 1923, the British and Canadian governments co-operated in the 1923 British Settlement Act, which promoted the immigration of British workers to Canada. The British government hoped that the scheme would relieve some of the social stresses that were affecting postwar Britain.

But things changed during the Depression. With many Canadians out of work, the government limited immigration, even from countries where immigrants had been actively recruited during the 1920s. Only white American and British immigrants who had enough money to support themselves were allowed into the country. In addition, unemployed immigrants and “troublemakers” — those who tried to organize workers into unions — were deported to their country of origin.

C&C Compare the percentages in Figure 7-8 with statistics from recent Canadian censuses (p. 28). How do these statistics reflect changes in Canadian immigration policies?

SEEKING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

For decades before World War I, Hutterites, Mennonites, and Doukhobors had immigrated to Canada to escape religious persecution. These communities, which trace their beginnings to 16th-century German-speaking countries and Russia, believed in pacifism — settling disputes by peaceful, rather than violent, means. They also believed in communal ownership of property.

Through the centuries, these communities had been forced to move from country to country in search of a home where they could live and practise their religion in peace. Many Hutterites, Mennonites, and Doukhobors were prosperous farmers who had money to buy farmland in Canada, and the Canadian government welcomed them to settle in Ontario and on the Prairies.

Figure 7-9 In 1924–1925, Canadian Pacific Railway used the Canadian pavilion at London’s British Empire Exhibition to campaign for immigrants. This poster was part of that campaign. What pull factors were designed to persuade British families to immigrate to Canada?
Fleeing Persecution

During World War I, about 4000 Hutterites, originally from Russia, immigrated to Alberta from South Dakota. In the United States, they had been persecuted because they spoke German and their pacifist beliefs had led them to refuse military service. When they asked American officials to direct their taxes to the Red Cross rather than to pay for the war, public opinion turned against them even more.

By 1919, public opinion in Canada was also turning against Hutterites, Mennonites, and Doukhobors. They were often viewed as “foreign” and unpatriotic because of their pacifist beliefs. And some people were jealous of their success as farmers.

When the Conservative government restricted immigration after World War I, fewer members of these three groups were allowed into Canada. But in 1922, the Liberals returned to power and immigration became more open. Between 1923 and 1929, for example, more than 22 000 Mennonites fled the Soviet Union and settled on farms in Ontario and on the Prairies.

Making History

A British Home Child

In the late 19th century and the first part of the 20th, as many as 100 000 British orphans and children of families who were poor were sent to Canada as part of a special immigration program. Called “home children,” they were sent to work, usually on farms, until they were adults. The following is part of Percy Brown’s story of his experience as a home child.

I was fourteen, in 1927, when the opportunity arrived . . . I was asked if I would like to go to Canada . . .

In March 1927, I boarded the Montrose. I don’t remember a lot of details about the journey . . .

After landing . . . I took a three-day train journey to Hamilton. There I stayed with Mr. Hill until he found me a place to stay . . .

The first place was a farm in Caledonia. There the owners viewed me and another young boy as workers only. I worked outside from about 5 a.m. to sometimes 10 p.m. I was allowed to stop only for a few minutes to eat my meals . . .

After six weeks of very hard work for which I was paid five dollars a month, I was returned to Mr. Hill . . .

My second place of work was in Drumbo. The farmer and his wife treated me as if I were their own child . . . I spent a wonderful six-year period with them.

Am I glad that I came to Canada? Indeed, yes! Canada has allowed me to follow many pathways; it has granted me a successful living and an opportunity to have a wonderful family. I have been very blessed.

Explorations

1. Why do you think that both the British and Canadian governments supported the program for home children? List two criteria government officials might have used to justify their support.

2. What circumstances today, if any, might justify a program that involved sending orphans or children from families who are poor to another country?
NOT WELCOME IN CANADA

While the Canadian government was trying to attract certain immigrants to Canada, it was also discouraging others. Blacks from the United States, for example, and Asians — from India, China, and Japan — were unwelcome.

Canadian government statements said that black people were “unsuited to the climate of Canada.” And blacks who already lived in Canada faced open discrimination. In Nova Scotia, for example, separate schools for black students were set up in 1918, and in 1921, the Quebec Superior Court ruled that racial segregation was acceptable in the province’s theatres.

Chinese immigrants had been required to pay a head tax since 1885, and once in Canada, neither Chinese nor Japanese people were allowed to vote. Then, in 1923, Parliament passed the Chinese Immigration Act, which barred nearly all Chinese immigrants.

This law meant that Chinese workers already in Canada could not bring their wives or children to this country. As a result, the Chinese community developed as a largely bachelor society in which fathers and husbands were separated from their families. Their wives in China were left to raise their children on their own, often in poverty. Fewer than 50 Chinese immigrants were allowed into Canada between 1923 and 1947.

In British Columbia, people from India had been barred from voting in 1907. They were not allowed to run for public office or become lawyers, accountants, or pharmacists. In a further effort to discourage immigration from India, Parliament had passed the Continuous Passage Act in 1908. This act said that a ship carrying Indians could not stop in any port along the way — an impossibility on a two-month voyage.

THE KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT

In 1914, a ship called the Komagata Maru was hired to carry Indian passengers to Vancouver from Asia. The ship took on passengers in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Yokohama. But when it entered Vancouver harbour on May 23, Canadian officials refused to allow the passengers to disembark. The ship had violated the Continuous Passage Act.

For two months, the Komagata Maru sat in the harbour while the Indian community in Vancouver supplied the passengers with food and appealed to the courts for help. But public opinion was overwhelmingly against allowing entry, and on July 23, the ship was escorted out of the harbour and sent back to India.

When the ship arrived in Kolkata, it was met by British police, who treated the passengers as criminals. Some were killed and others were arrested and jailed.

There are continual attempts by undesirables of alien and impoverished nationalities to enter Canada, but these attempts will be checked as much as possible at their source.

— Supervisor of European continental immigration for Canada, 1923

I have no ill-feeling against people coming from Asia personally, but I reaffirm that the national life of Canada will not permit any large degree of immigration from Asia . . . I intend to stand up absolutely on all occasions on this one great principle — of a white country and a white British Columbia.

— H.H. Stevens, Conservative member of Parliament for Vancouver City Centre, June 1914

Figure 7-11 When the Komagata Maru entered Vancouver harbour, it carried 376 passengers, mostly Sikhs. This photograph shows the crowding the passengers endured on the voyage and while waiting to hear whether they would be allowed to disembark.
**Voices**

We must nevertheless seek to keep this part of the continent free from unrest and from too great an intermixture of foreign strains of blood, as much the same thing lies at the basis of the oriental problem . . . I fear that we would have riots if we agreed to a policy that admitted numbers of Jews. Also we would add to the difficulties between the Provinces and the Dominion.

— William Lyon Mackenzie King, prime minister, in a diary entry, March 1938

**Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany**

During the 1920s, an organization called Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Canada lobbied the government to allow Jews to immigrate. With the help of JIAS, several thousand Jews were admitted. But during the Depression, all immigration dropped dramatically. In 1936, for example, fewer than 12,000 immigrants arrived.

**Anti-Semitism** — prejudice against Jews — was widespread, and Jews were often excluded from clubs and other social organizations and discouraged from buying homes in certain neighbourhoods.

In Canada, hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, sprang up. Encouraged by anti-Semitic activities in Germany, where the Nazis were persecuting Jews and other minorities, these groups targeted visible minorities, Jews, and Catholics. What strategies might governments use to deal with the rise of hate groups?

Canada had no refugee policy that allowed immigrants to be accepted on the basis of need. Jews who faced persecution in Germany were required to follow the same immigration procedures as other applicants. And because few immigrants were being accepted, German Jews had little hope of escaping to Canada.

From 1933 to 1945, Canada admitted fewer than 5000 Jewish immigrants. During the same years, the United States accepted more than 200,000, Britain accepted about 70,000, and the city of Shanghai, China, received tens of thousands of Jewish refugees.

**The Saint Louis**

Though Liberal prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King was sympathetic to the problems of German Jews, he was also convinced that allowing Jewish refugees into Canada would threaten national unity and his party’s political support in Quebec. There, the provincial government opposed all immigration.

The *St. Louis* tragedy showed the depth of anti-Semitism in Canada. In the spring of 1939, the passenger liner *St. Louis* left Hamburg, Germany, with more than 900 Jews on board. Trying to escape Nazi persecution, they were bound for Cuba. They carried tourist visas but hoped to be accepted as refugees. But when they arrived, they were not allowed to disembark.

So they appealed for help to both Canada and the United States, but both countries refused to accept them. The *St. Louis* was forced to sail back across the Atlantic. Some of the refugees were eventually allowed into European countries that were taken over by Germany during World War II — and more than half the passengers were eventually killed by the Nazis.
**DISCRIMINATION IN CANADA**

During the 1920s and 1930s, few people complained about Canada’s restrictive immigration policies or about the deportation of immigrants. Many people actively supported these policies or chose to remain silent. Immigrants were often viewed as alien and a threat to jobs. Some people believed that many immigrants were communists who wanted to overthrow the government.

No law prevented employers from using hiring practices that discriminated against groups such as Jews and Ukrainians, and some immigrants resorted to hiding their origins by changing their names to sound more British. Black Canadians were restricted to a small number of occupations. They could, for example, work as porters on trains — and many did.

### How important is your name to you? How might changing your name to fit into a dominant culture affect your sense of personal identity?

Universities and training programs routinely discriminated by setting higher standards for people whose names did not sound British.

Some groups were also denied social benefits. In Alberta during the Depression, for example, relief payments for people of Chinese heritage were 50 per cent lower than those of other Canadians. Relief payments for Aboriginal people were also lower because officials believed that they could live off the land. And some immigrants were deported if they even applied for relief.

Many Canadians strongly believed that immigrants should try to assimilate as quickly as possible by abandoning their own culture, traditions, and language. The public education system was viewed as a tool that should be used to ensure that the children of immigrants assimilated into mainstream Canadian society.

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**Voices**

None of [Winnipeg’s] chartered banks, trust companies, or insurance companies would knowingly hire a Jew, and anyone with a Ukrainian or Polish name had almost no chance of employment except rough manual labour . . . For the young Ukrainians and Poles, there was a possible solution if they could beat the accent handicap. They could change their names. So they changed their names . . . Caroline Czarnecki overnight became Connie Kingston, Mike Drazenovick became Martin Drake, and Steve Dziatkewich became Edward Dawson. But for the Jews, a name change was not enough.

— James H. Gray, journalist and historian, in The Winter Years, a memoir, 1966

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**RECALL . . . REFLECT . . . RESPOND**

1. When talking about immigration, people often use the analogy of a door: it can open to admit more immigrants, or it can close to keep them out. Identify periods between 1919 and 1938 when the immigration door opened and closed and explain the circumstances that caused these changes.

2. Discrimination against ethnic groups was open and widespread in the 1920s and 1930s. Today, this is illegal, and most Canadians would find it unacceptable. Should Canadians of earlier periods be criticized for their attitudes toward minority groups? Explain your response.

3. Create a chart like the one shown to summarize the challenges and opportunities that faced many non-British immigrants to Canada during the 1920s and 1930s. Conclude by placing yourself in the shoes of a potential immigrant and explain why you would — or would not — choose to immigrate to Canada.
What are some legacies of this period?

During the 1920s, some people experienced prosperity, but in the 1930s, many suffered hardships as a result of the Great Depression. These factors led to changes in the social and artistic spheres, and these changes left legacies that continue into the present.

Social Reform

Social reformers fought to change some of the inequalities in Canadian society. And under pressure from social democrats such as J.S. Woodsworth, governments of the 1920s and 1930s took some small steps toward improving the lives of children and senior citizens. But even these steps sparked heated debate. Some people said the government was going too far, while others said it was not going far enough.

Old-Age Pensions

By the 1920s, Canadians were living longer, but many older people existed in poverty. Fewer people lived on farms, where everyone — young and old — shared in the work and benefits. In cities, paid work for older people was scarce; age discrimination was common, and most factories recruited younger workers.

Although some veterans with disabilities, as well as the widows of soldiers killed in World War I, received small government pensions, senior citizens received nothing.

J.S. Woodsworth and other social reformers wanted to change this. Woodsworth had considerable influence over Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, and in 1927, King’s government passed the Old Age Pensions Act.

The pension, which paid a maximum of $20 a month, was available only to a limited number of people. It could be claimed only by those who
- were British subjects aged 70 and older
- had lived in Canada for more than 20 years and in their province of residence for more than five years
- had an annual income of less than $365
- were not status Indians

Before receiving the pension, senior citizens were required to undergo a means test and disclose all their assets. But provincial authorities administered the means test, and the way they calculated income varied widely from province to province. Owning property was a factor, for example, and it did not matter whether the property generated income. During the 1930s, some provinces even required seniors to prove that their children could not support them.

Is it fair to ask people to undergo a means test to prove that they are in need? Should only senior citizens who are poor receive a pension — or should pensions be available to everyone? Explain your responses.
Various forms of child labour had existed in Canada from the time the first European settlers arrived, but attitudes toward this practice changed significantly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

As Canada became increasingly urban, fewer children worked on farms or entered apprenticeships for skilled occupations. More and more children found work in factories, mills, and mines. These jobs were usually poorly paid and failed to provide skills that children could use as adults.

During the first decades of the 20th century, social reformers campaigned to abolish child labour by making school attendance compulsory. They believed that children who were in school could not be at work, and they pressed provincial governments to pass laws requiring school attendance. These education laws, along with laws banning children from some workplaces, forced children to attend school.

By 1929, for example, most Canadian provinces had passed laws banning children under the age of 14 from working in factories and mines. In 1911, only 63 per cent of 14-year-olds had been in school. By 1931, the figure was 83 per cent.

The new laws did not end child labour completely. Some children younger than 14 continued to work full-time, though not in mines and factories. Families often relied on their children’s income, especially during the Depression.

How does a country benefit from banning child labour? How do children benefit? In what circumstances might allowing some children to work be acceptable?

British Home Children

Although some British home children were treated well by the families who took them in, others were exploited. Like Percy Brown at his first placement (p. 184), they worked long and hard for food, shelter, and a few dollars a month. Once the children were placed in homes — where they were supposed to remain for seven years — little was done to supervise their care.

Some people argued that the home children were poorly treated, and others said that Canada had enough to do taking care of Canadian children who needed help. In 1925, the federal government banned what were called “juvenile immigrants” younger than 14. By the beginning of the Depression, the program had ended.
The Media and the Arts

During the 1920s and 1930s, Canada was undergoing a transformation. Part of this transformation involved developing fresh approaches in the media, literature, and the visual arts.

Radio

During the 1920s and 1930s, radio was considered largely an entertainment medium. Families across Canada would gather to listen to programs such as *The Happy Gang* and *Hockey Night in Canada* with Foster Hewitt.

This changed in 1935, when J. Frank Willis pioneered a new kind of news reporting. On April 12, an abandoned gold mine in Moose River, Nova Scotia, had collapsed, trapping three men underground. The 28-year-old Willis worked for the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission in the Maritimes. He persuaded the CRBC, now the CBC, to run live reports from the site and began broadcasting at 6 p.m. on April 20.

Twice an hour for the next 56 hours, Willis reported on efforts to free the trapped men. This was the world’s first live 24-hour news event, and by the time the men were rescued, about 100 million people in North America and Europe had tuned in to listen.

Magazines

Like movies and radio programs, Canadian magazines also faced competition — in this case from glossy American magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post*. Some of the early Canadian magazines failed, but others survived.

*The Beaver*, which was still publishing in 2009, was started by the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1920 to celebrate the company’s 250th anniversary. One of the company’s main goals was to promote its stores, but the magazine also focused on Canadian history and culture, publishing photo essays and stories by Canadian writers such as Stephen Leacock.

*Maclean’s*, which was founded in 1905, had built up a strong readership that continued to increase, even during the Depression. Issues featured articles by Canadian writers including Emily Murphy, one of the Famous Five, as well as art by Canadians, first-hand accounts of people’s attempts to survive the Depression, and fiction by authors such as Lucy Maud Montgomery, creator of Anne of Green Gables.

*Maclean’s* prided itself on presenting a Canadian perspective. In 1926, editor J. Vernon Mackenzie said that the magazine’s success proved “that a Canadian magazine staffed by Canadian editors, and featuring predominantly the work of Canadian writers and artists, could merit the support of a discriminating Canadian public.”
MOVIES
By 1920, the American movie industry was well-established. Initially, the movie studios in California turned out silent films, but in 1927, *The Jazz Singer* ushered in the “talkies.” Like their neighbours to the south, Canadians loved the movies and movie stars such as Greta Garbo and Charlie Chaplin. Even during the Depression, many people managed to scrape together the money to go to the movies.

Although Canada produced few movies during the 1920s and 1930s, some Canadians played an important role in the development of the American industry. One of the top stars of the era was Mary Pickford, who was born Gladys Mary Smith in Toronto. Known as “America’s Sweetheart,” Pickford joined other major stars — including Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin — to establish United Artists, a film studio. This studio played an influential role in the development of the movie industry. Other Canadian fixtures in Hollywood at the time were comedian Marie Dressler and studio executive Louis B. Mayer.

CANADIAN LITERATURE
In the early years of the 20th century, some Canadian writers told stories of people struggling against an unforgiving wilderness. Others told sunnier tales of rural life in tight-knit communities such as Avonlea, Prince Edward Island, the setting of Lucy Maud Montgomery’s 1908 novel, *Anne of Green Gables*.

But by the 1920s and 1930s, Canadian writers were developing a different sensibility. They were telling grittier stories influenced by the social disruptions brought about by World War I, the poverty of the Depression, and the growth of cities. Douglas Durkin’s 1923 novel, *The Magpie*, for example, relates the struggles of a war veteran trying to find his way in postwar society.

Canadian writer Morley Callaghan, who was born in Toronto in 1903, published his first novel, *Strange Fugitive*, in 1928. Through the 1930s, Callaghan’s fiction, especially his innovative, tightly crafted, and intense short stories, gained an international audience.

Callaghan’s language was sparse, and his stories were told from the perspective of ordinary people — working men and women — who were often caught in painful predicaments and whose lives were marred by poor choices.

CANADIAN VISUAL ART
The growing sense of Canadian identity that emerged after World War I was encouraged by some Canadian painters who were also developing a distinctive style. Until then, most Canadian artists had been heavily influenced by European styles and techniques, but a number of painters found inspiration in Canada’s rugged landscapes. Using strong, vivid colours, they wanted to show how the landscape affected them. To do this, they went out and experienced the physical settings for themselves.

It was hardly more than dawn when George woke up so suddenly. He lay wide awake listening to a heavy truck moving slowly on the street below; he heard one truck-driver shout angrily to another; he heard a hundred small street sounds multiplying and rolling with the motion of the city awakening.

— Morley Callaghan, writer, in “The Blue Kimono,” 1935

Emily Carr was one of the groundbreaking Canadian artists. Carr grew up in Victoria, B.C., in the late 19th century. After studying in Paris, she developed a unique style, but neither this nor her subjects — the culture of the Kwakiutl people and the landscape of the West Coast — was appreciated at the time. But in the late 1920s, she received encouragement from members of the Group of Seven, though her works did not sell well during her lifetime.

Several of the Group of Seven began their careers as commercial artists. A.Y. Jackson and F.H. Varley also served as war artists for the Canadian War Records Office. By the 1920s, members of the group were experimenting with new styles and fresh ways of depicting the Canadian landscape.

Many Canadians rejected this new style, with its bold colours and brooding images. The Group of Seven’s first exhibition in 1920 drew mixed reviews. And when the National Gallery of Canada bought an Arthur Lismer painting, it sparked public outrage. One patron of the arts remarked, “It’s bad enough to live in this country, without having pictures of it in your home.”

But over time, this new style captured the imagination of many Canadians, who connected it with their growing sense of identity.

**Recall... Reflect... Respond**

1. With a partner, brainstorm to create a list of factors that might have influenced the social developments that occurred during the 1920s and 1930s. When you are finished brainstorming, write three statements to summarize your points, then rank your statements in order of importance. Share your statements and rankings with another pair and discuss differences in your ideas.

2. Imagine yourself as a high school student in 1938.
   a) Describe ways in which your social life then would have been different from your social life today. Include in your answer comments about leisure activities, social relationships, and views about the future.
   b) Describe ways in which your social life then would have been similar to your social life today.

3. Which of the social and cultural legacies of the 1920s and 1930s has had the most significant effect on Canada? To help you decide, create a three-column chart like the one shown.

   In the column headed “Legacies,” include topics listed in this section of the chapter. Then, on the basis of your understanding of events and conditions in Canada between 1914 and 1938, list both short- and long-term effects. Incorporate your ideas into a paragraph that responds to the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legacies</th>
<th>Short-Term Effects</th>
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Tom Thomson was never a member of the Group of Seven, but his distinctive painting style combined with his mysterious early death to ensure that he became one of Canada’s best-known and most influential artists.

Born in 1877, Thomson grew up in Leith, a small town northeast of Owen Sound, Ontario. Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, he began his career as a commercial artist in Seattle, Washington, and then in Toronto.

DEVELOPING A CANADIAN STYLE

In 1912, Thomson travelled for the first time to Algonquin Park, which was to inspire so much of his art and that of the Group of Seven, many of whom were his friends. Thomson was so impressed by the setting that he convinced F.H. Varley, A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, and Franklin Carmichael to join him there.

In 1914, he moved to Canoe Lake in the park to paint full-time. During the next few years, he painted his most famous works, including The West Wind, which is among the best-known Canadian paintings.

In October 1914, Thomson described their experiences in a letter. “[A.Y.] Jackson and myself have been making quite a few sketches lately and I will send a bunch down with Lismer when he goes back,” Thomson wrote. “He & Varley are greatly taken with the look of things here, just now the maples are about all stripped of leaves but the birches are very rich in colour. We are all working away but the best I can do does not do the place much justice in the way of beauty.”

In July 1917, while many of his fellow artists were overseas fighting in World War I or serving as war artists, Thomson drowned in Canoe Lake. Although his death was ruled accidental, doubts about the real cause continue to fascinate people to this day.

THOMSON’S LEGACY

After Thomson’s death, A.Y. Jackson said that his friend found “riches undreamed of” in a landscape that most people found “a monotonous dreary waste.” Jackson said that Thomson “found it all beautiful: muskeg, burnt and drowned land, log chutes, beaver dams, creeks, wild rivers and placid lakes, wild flowers, northern lights, the flight of wild geese and the changing seasons from spring to summer to autumn.”

Although Thomson died before the Group of Seven was officially formed, his influence continued in their work and in that of the generations of Canadian artists who followed them.

Figure 7-21 The West Wind, by Tom Thomson, 1917

Explorations

1. Examine The West Wind and explain how it reflects the changes that were occurring in Canadian society. In your response, consider styles, subjects, and attitudes.

2. Do the landscape paintings of Thomson and the Group of Seven continue to reflect Canadian identity today? Explain your response.
Chapter 7
Questions and Activities

1. Rita Joe, a Mi’kmaw from Nova Scotia, experienced residential schools when she attended Shubenacadie Residential School. She later expressed her reaction in the poem “I Lost My Talk.”

I Lost My Talk
I lost my talk
The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.
You snatched it away:
I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my word.
Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.
So gently I offer my hand and ask,
Let me find my talk
So I can teach you about me.

a) What is the central message of Rita Joe’s poem? What words helped you recognize this message?
b) What do you think it meant for Rita Joe to be assimilated into the dominant culture? What did she lose? Did she gain anything?
c) Rita Joe died in 2007. If you could meet her, what three questions might you ask about her residential school experience and assimilation? Explain why you would ask each question.

2. The literature of the 1930s often reflected conditions during the Great Depression. Morley Callaghan was born and raised in Toronto and spent the 1920s working for a newspaper. He also started writing fiction in the 1920s. His 1937 novel, More Joy in Heaven, is the story of a former criminal who is trying to straighten out his life during the Depression.

Read the following excerpt from More Joy in Heaven, then respond to the questions.

One night a scared little man with a drooping black moustache and a coat far too big for him pounded on Kip’s door. His coat was torn. He was pleading desperately with his eyes, without even opening his mouth. The police were chasing him, he said. He had stolen a diamond ring from a jewellery store window. His wrist was badly cut and there was blood on the sleeve of his coat.

“I got four kids,” he said. “I got a wife and four kids and they got no clothes. Please, Mr. Caley, I’ve never been in trouble. I worked in a tailor’s shop twenty years. I lost two fingers in the wife’s washing machine. I’m out of work, years. Please Mr. Caley, let me stay here. No one’ll ever think of looking in your place for me.”

Everything that had happened in his life seemed to be laid out there in the lines of his twitching face. Kip understood why the tailor had turned to him, of all the people in the city, and he was very moved. Telling him to lie down and stay there the night, he took the coat to the bathroom and washed the blood from the sleeve. But while he listened to the little man sucking in breath, almost hearing the pumping of his heart, he began to be bothered. He felt disloyal to everybody. Was he joining himself to this little tailor against them, he asked himself. Yet the loyalty to the wretched tailor seemed to come out of the deepest part of his being. When he went downstairs to the restaurant he felt miserable. He made up his mind to go and see Father Butler and ask him if he was betraying the people who trusted him.

a) What elements of this excerpt show conditions in the 1930s?
b) Select five words or phrases that suggest that the main character is feeling stress or conflict.
c) Why do you suppose Kip Caley, the main character, would be loyal to the tailor when sheltering the frightened man could cause trouble?
d) What can a novel such as More Joy in Heaven reveal about life in the 1930s? Should a novel such as this be considered a reliable primary source document?
e) What do you think might happen next in the story?
3. Historical empathy is the ability to see yourself as someone who might have lived in the past. Historical empathy can help you to understand people’s responses to events of other times.

Work with a partner to imagine yourself in the shoes of one of the following characters. Think about how the character you choose would be influenced by events and people during the 1920s and 1930s.

- a First Nations child who is starting Grade 10 at a residential school
- a young Irish farmer who has seen a poster advertising free land in Canada
- a 15- or 16-year-old immigrant whose family now owns a farm in Saskatchewan
- a 20- to 30-year-old passenger on the Komagata Maru
- a 30- to 40-year-old Chinese restaurant worker who cannot bring his family to Canada

Create a poster, a short drama, a video, a Web page, or another visual presentation that tells the character’s story. In your presentation, explain why your character holds particular opinions and beliefs. Ensure that your presentation answers this question: What helped shape my character’s view of the world?

Prepare notes to plan your presentation and to help you respond to questions your classmates may ask when you make your presentation.

4. In a small group, create a roleplay involving two groups in 1929:

- newly arrived immigrants from the Soviet Union
- Canadians of British heritage from a small town in Ontario

The immigrants are looking for a home in Canada and have met local citizens in the town hall. Using respectful language, outline the discussion that might take place as the newcomers try to convince the residents that they should be welcomed and accommodated, while the residents explain their reluctance to accept the immigrants.

Include factual material and ensure that your roleplay accurately reflects the issues and conditions of the time. Think about the questions your classmates might ask when you finish your roleplay and discuss how you might respond.

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**ACHIEVE Chapter Seven**

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<th>Question</th>
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<td>Knowledge &amp; Understanding</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>1c, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>1c, 2d, 3, 4</td>
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**The challenge for this unit (pp. 122–123) asks you to analyze, interpret, and evaluate two written primary sources in response to the unit issue question: To what degree did internal and external forces transform Canada between 1914 and 1938?**

Review the primary sources you are thinking of including in your museum exhibit.

- Will the sources you are considering help you respond to the unit issue question?
- Do your sources fit the criteria you and your classmates established?
- Have you carefully researched your sources to be sure they are authentic, reliable, and accurate?
- Have you noted the information you will need to acknowledge your sources?