

# Teaching Women's History

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Canada's History Webinar

# Guiding Questions

- Do students see women's history as relevant?
- How do we move beyond tokenism?
- How do we deal with a lack of resources?
- How do we engage all learners?

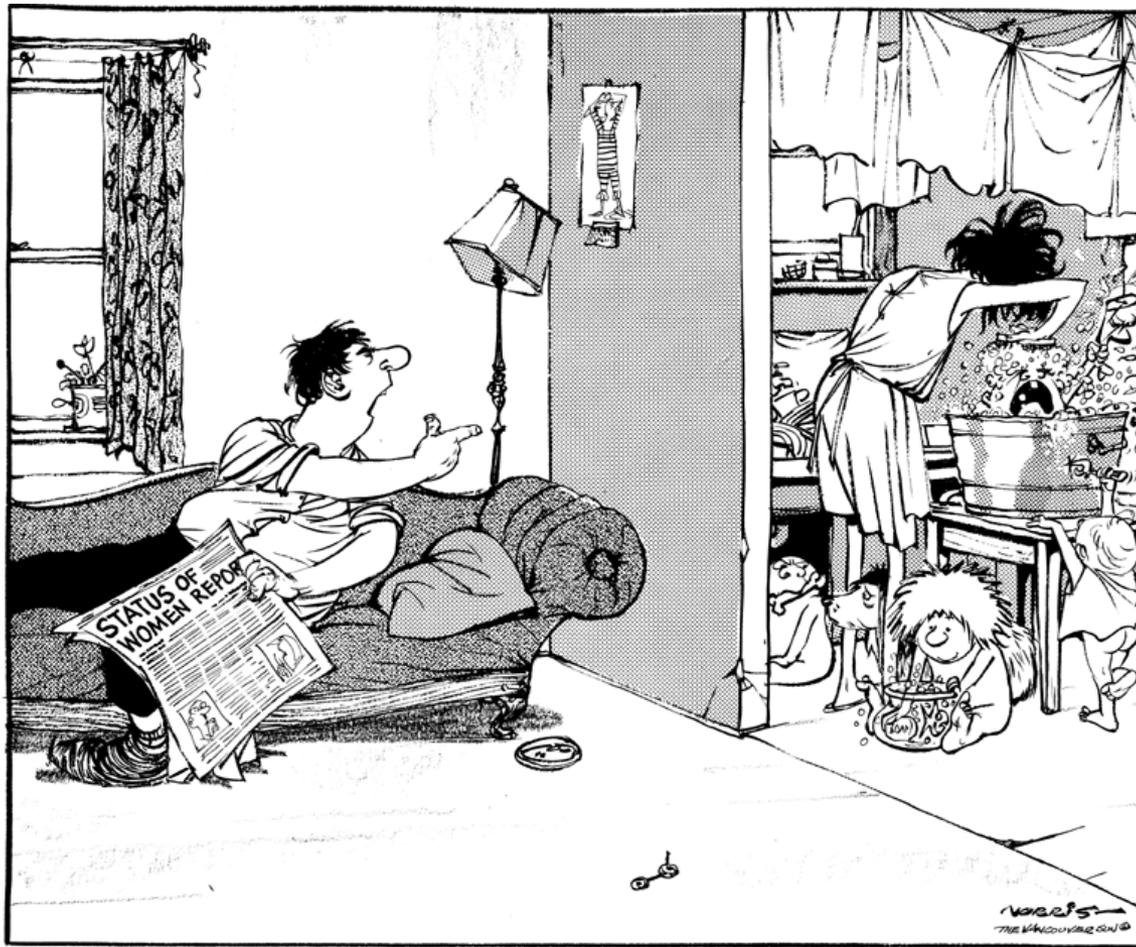
# Is women's history relevant?

- What were the causes of Prohibition?
- Shifts the content from bootlegging and gangsters to social justice.



Prohibition, not just flappers and bootleggers!

# Going beyond Who was Nellie McClung?



"What's the point of them going to all this trouble if you won't put in for Senator, join the RCMP or run a crown corporation?"

Cartoon: Len Norris, *Vancouver Sun*, December 9, 1970

Found at the [SFU Editorial Cartoons database](#) and in [Canadian Sources Investigated](#) (print)

# Disrupting the narratives

- What is wrong with these statements?
  - “Women worked in factories in WWI and that got them the vote”
  - “When women were declared persons, that meant they could vote”
- How do we change the misconceptions and disrupt the narratives?

SECTION  
FOUR

# REALITY CHECK

## Did the War Really Change the Role of Women in the Workforce?

### WORDS TO KNOW

munitions  
secondary sources  
primary sources  
propriety  
public sphere

Evidence 1.26

With a partner, brainstorm a list of all the jobs (paid or unpaid) that a woman might have done in the early 1900s. How might the First World War affect this list? Share your list in a class discussion.

BEFORE  
READING

As men left their jobs to fight overseas, women began to replace them in the workforce. During the First World War, 30 000 women worked in munitions factories, and thousands more worked in other industries, offices, and on farms.

### Female Population and Labour Force Participation, Canada, 1901–1931

Year	Female population	Labour force participation rate
1901	1 957 000	14.4%
1911	2 521 000	16.6%
1921	3 184 000	17.7%
1931	3 875 000	19.4%

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada, 1982.

Evidence 1.27

### Percentage Distribution of Working Women by Leading Occupational Groups, Canada, 1901–1931

Occupational group	1901	1911	1921	1931
Clerical	5.3%	9.4%	18.7%	17.7%

### Interpreting Statistical Evidence

1. Look at Evidence 1.26. During which decade did women make the most gains in their participation rate in the workforce?
2. Why are these data useful or not useful for your reality check?
3. What specific data would make the information in Evidence 1.26 more helpful in understanding women working during the First World War?
4. Examine Evidence 1.27. In your notebook, rank in order (most popular to least popular) the occupations in 1921 and 1931.
5. Where have significant changes occurred?
6. How might you account for the changes or lack of change?
  7. Which occupational group increased the most as a result of the war years? Which occupational group decreased the least?
  8. Speculate on why the changes in question 7 occurred in these two areas. Can you make any connection with the war?
  9. Based on Evidence 1.26 and 1.27, state your

DURING  
READING



An inquiry approach can disrupt the strong narratives

# Variety of Sources

In 1943 the government conducted a major campaign to encourage women to enlist in the armed forces. This advertisement appeals primarily to a sense of

- A. duty.
- B. fashion.
- C. courage.
- D. adventure

From the [Begbie Contest Society](#) (developed by Charles Hou, GG History award winner)

RECRUITING OFFICE

C.W.A.C.

WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

COME ON, PEG - IT'LL BE THRILLING!

• "Of course it'll be a thrill. There'll be new friends to meet, new places to see and a life so different from what you have known that you'll get a thrill every minute."  
"But, more important, you'll be doing your DUTY." YOU have certain capabilities, certain talents. The work to which you will be assigned in the C.W.A.C. will allow you to make the most of these. You will be happy in your work, find it pleasant and easy, and you will also find the path to promotions.  
It's a great life for a girl, great in every way you look at it. You can't leave the task of winning the war all to the men... join up today.

This is Our Battle, Too!

BUY VICTORY BONDS

CANADIAN WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

# WOMEN'S WORK DURING THE WAR

## The Home Front

In 1914, most women's roles were limited to the home. Women worked hard raising children, looking after the household, and often looking after the family farm. Some women worked as maids, nurses, teachers, or in factories, but most stopped working outside the home after marriage. World War I called on women to contribute in both traditional and non-traditional ways. Early **feminists**, like Nellie McClung, began to make their voices heard.

### feminists

people who believe in and promote the equality of women and men



We have seen our brave lads go out from us in health and hope, amid music and cheers, and already we know that some of them will not come back. "Killed in action," "died of wounds," "missing," say the brief dispatches [official reports], which tell us that we have made our investment of blood.

▲ **Figure 21** Nellie McClung explains how war was affecting women, particularly mothers. What does she mean by an "investment of blood"?

◀ **Figure 22** The Patriotic Fund was a private fund that took donations from individuals and businesses to give to families of soldiers. Women receiving assistance were investigated to make sure they were respectable and deserving of help. What is this poster urging Canadians to do? What can it tell us about society's expectations of women during World War I?

## New Roles

As men left for the front lines to fight and Canada increased war production, 30 000 women went to work in war **munitions** factories. This work was better paid than many other opportunities available to women, but they still earned less than their male co-workers. Women also joined the war forces by serving as drivers in the air force and as nurses on the front lines. After the war, women were expected to return to their pre-war roles, and most did so.



▲ **Figure 23** A Canadian woman works as an ambulance driver at the front. Women were not always welcomed in military units in their support roles as nurses, cooks, and drivers. Why do you think this was the case?

*This is most interesting and by far the most worthwhile work I have yet done. It's wonderful to me that I have had the opportunity of doing something for these brave fellows.*

▲ **Figure 24** Canadian nurse Sophie Hoerner describes her work at a field hospital near the front lines in a letter from June 10, 1915. How does she see herself differently because of her war service?

*1795 p[atien]ts in hosp[ita]l!  
Convoys and evacuations every day. Each night we have one or two deaths and several hemorrhages! The sisters are working dreadfully hard, but no one complains at all.*

▲ **Figure 25** Alice Isaacson was a Canadian nurse in World War I. What does her diary entry from October 11, 1917, tell you about her work?

## CHECK IN

### 1. Continuity and Change

How were women's new roles during the war changing traditional expectations? How were they continuing traditional expectations?

### 2. Evaluate and Draw Conclusions

What were women's roles in Canadian society during World War I? How were their roles different from today? How were they the same?

# Essential questions to engage all

- Essential question for the course
  - Is Canada a country you can be proud of?
- Must generate criteria
  - What do we mean by proud? What would make you ashamed?
- Must assess events based on criteria
  - We used a rank system (from [The Big Six](#)) -2 to +2 from shame to pride, events could be neutral/both
- Choose events and people to support your thesis

# The results?

- Listen to Sam's year-end interview where he explains his ranking.
  - This is an applied level class – low literacy and special needs for most learners
  - Think about how he might have answered a similar question on an exam.



# Reflections

- What did you hear?
- What did you notice?
- What do you wonder?



# Questions and Discussion

- Resources :
  - Begbie Contest Society
  - The Big Six
  - The Historical Thinking Project
  - Canadian Sources Investigated
  - History Uncovered
- My resources:  
<http://collishaw.pbworks.com>
- Other resources:
  - [Essential Questions – Wiggins and McTighe](#)
  - [100 Canadian Heroines and 100 More Canadian Heroines – Merna Forster](#)