

Discussion Guide: "Shots Fired"

Source: Wendy Haaf, "[Shots Fired](#)," *Canada's History*, Winter 2025.

Grade level: Upper middle or high school

Time required: One to two classes (60-90 minutes)

Essential question: What should be the role of government health departments in preventing the spread of communicable diseases?

Curriculum connections: This activity explores the history of public health in Canada from pre-Confederation to the present. It connects with broader themes of governance and citizenship, social reform, science and innovation, and global health. Specific curriculum links can be found in **Appendix C**.

Historical thinking concepts: Continuity and Change, Cause and Consequence, Historical Perspectives, the Ethical Dimension, Evidence, Historical Significance

Discussion questions:

1. How have people in Canada faced threats of widespread communicable diseases (including epidemics and pandemics) throughout history?
2. How have various levels of government (federal, provincial/territorial, municipal and Indigenous governments) responded to threats of epidemics and pandemics?
3. How have people in Canada responded to government health interventions over time? What factors contribute to public support or opposition?

Activity:

1. Introduce the topic by sharing newspaper clippings from the 1918-1920 flu pandemic. Consider transcribing the clippings into plain text so that students are unaware of the time period being discussed. See **Appendix A** for a sample of newspaper articles or look for articles from your community's newspaper to share.
2. Share life expectancy and childhood mortality statistics in Canada from throughout the twentieth century (see **Appendix B**). Identify changes/trends.
3. Have students read the article "Shots Fired" by Wendy Haaf while individually completing a simple "See/Think/Wonder" exercise on a sheet of looseleaf.

Have students consider the questions below:

- What key events and facts are presented?
 - What is the author's main argument or interpretation?
 - What questions do you still have? What perspectives are missing?
4. Have students share their responses with a classmate or in small groups.
 5. Bring the class together to share their observations.
 6. Going back into their small groups, have students discuss each of the three discussion questions.
 7. Bring the class together to consider the three discussion questions.

Reflection:

Students write a few sentences or paragraph response to the essential question: What should be the role of government health departments in preventing the spread of communicable diseases?

Extension / additional reading:

Depending on the background experiences and maturity of their students, teachers could provide photos of Canadian cemeteries containing children's graves to provide visual representation of the effects of childhood diseases and other communicable diseases.

Author: *Robert Jardine, retired educator, Vice-President of the Social Studies Educators Network of Canada*

APPENDIX A: Sample Newspaper Articles

Citizens Determined Flu Shall Not Spread

**CITY OFFICIALS ARE ASSURED THAT SPIRIT OF ORDER
WILL BE OBSERVED—STREET CARS BEING FUM-
IGATED DAILY AND WILL CONTINUE
TO RUN—17 NEW CASES**

"The flu shall not spread."
Saskatoon is as a unit in its determination to do everything possible to prevent Spanish influenza from becoming as serious an epidemic here as it has in many other Canadian cities. Over a hundred citizens called up the mayor and assistant-commissioner this morning regarding the action of the council in closing all public meetings and the schools, and of that number only one person registered a complaint. All of the others complimented the city officials upon their action and promised to see that the spirit of the order was lived up to in its entirety.

There has been no deaths from influenza in Saskatoon today. One death from this cause in Colonsay was reported to a Saskatoon undertaker late this afternoon. It was Wm. K. Brown, merchant. Funeral at Colonsay, Oct. 19.

Won't Stop Street Cars

"We do not consider it necessary to stop running the street cars yet," said G. D. Archibald, city engineer, when he was told that such a measure had been taken by the civic authorities in Philadelphia. "We are fumigating the cars every night and spraying them thoroughly with formaldehyde and other disinfectants. People are

asked to allow the windows to remain up so that a better ventilation may be had. I do not believe the street cars a very grave source of danger as regards contagion. In Philadelphia it is different, as people remain on the cars for a long time. Here they only take short rides, and the risk they run in doing so is not very great."

While only one death has been reported in the city up to noon today, the fact has been brought to light that the spread of the disease in the city has been much greater than had been suspected. After the conference which the mayor held with the medical men of the city yesterday afternoon over thirty cases were reported. Many of these cases were not new ones but were reported by the physicians who attended the conference after the necessity for reporting all cases had been brought to their attention by the mayor.

A total of 29 cases had been reported up to Wednesday evening. Twelve more were reported up to noon yesterday, while 22 more were reported during the afternoon, bringing the total up to last night to 64. Eight new cases had been reported up to 10 o'clock this morning and 9 more reported up to the time The Star goes to press, making a total of 81 cases in the city.

#1

["Citizens Determined Flu Shall Not Spread,"](#) Saskatoon Daily Star, October 18, 1918.

Flu Ban Goes on Again; Schools Closed at Noon

Acting Medical Health Officer R. B. C. Thomson clamped on the 'flu lid in Lethbridge at noon today, Monday. So he informed the Herald at 10 o'clock this morning.

"A great many new cases have been reported this morning and there is no other course to take," declared Dr. Thomson.

The Health Board met Saturday and weighed on the advisability of a closing order. The matter was left in the hands of the Acting Medical Health Officer to take whatever action he deemed necessary. This morning he took action under the following section of the Order-in-Council of Oct. 17:

"As soon as Spanish Influenza or Epidemic Influenza shows a disposition to spread in any city, town or village or municipal district, every Medical Health Officer shall immediately order the

closing of all schools, churches, theatres, picture shows, public meetings and all other places within its jurisdiction where the public gather or congregate and shall prohibit unnecessary gatherings of people in stores, street corners or other public places."

There are now about 100 houses in quarantine in the city. One death has occurred.

Dr. Thomson said he had no power to close the pool halls or stores.

POOL ROOMS CLOSED

On first hearing the report the theatre men of the city were going to fight the order on the ground that the pool rooms and other places where people congregated were not being closed. Later, however, the pool rooms were included in the order and the theatre managers reluctantly decided to abide by the order.

#2

["Flu Ban Goes on Again; Schools Closed at Noon," Lethbridge Herald, March 24, 1919.](#)

New Influenza Record For the City of Halifax

The Number of Cases Reported by Fifteen of
the Doctors is 239.—Hospital
Accommodation.

HALIFAX, October 29—A new record for influenza cases was recorded by the health authorities yesterday, a total of 239 cases being recorded by the health authorities doctors from nine o'clock yesterday up until six o'clock last night. There are yet a large number of reports to be received. The unexpected big jump in civilian cases in Halifax yesterday is likely to continue during the present week as, according to some medical men, the apex has not yet been reached. Since the disease was first discovered here there has been almost a continuous daily increase in the number of new cases, but the number reported yesterday is the largest for any single day yet. The civilian cases reported yesterday affect 129 homes or nearly two hundred families as in many instances more

than one family reside in the same house. Fifty-three military cases were reported. The disease has reached the epidemic stage in Halifax. It is not confined to any particular portion of the city. It appears to be widespread as reports show that cases exist on Barrington, Allen, North Park, Shirley, Harris, Bloomfield, Merkle, Grafton, South, Blowers, South Kline, Dresden Row, Market, Morris, South Park, Brussels, Starr, Queen, Argyle, Lower Water, Henry, Sackville, Creighton, Robie, Cornwallis, Maynard, Brunswick, Maitland, Gittingen, North, John, and in many of the relief tenements on the Commons and the Exhibition grounds.

THE health board are making every effort to cope with the disease and their efforts to date have no doubt been responsible for the low mortality rate, altho the provincial health officer reports fifty-three deaths from the disease since it was first discovered here. This does not include the number of persons who have died in Dartmouth and in other parts of the county. In many of the outside places the disease is reported to be on the wane. In Halifax it appears to be at its height and during the next few days reports of many cases are expected. The work of placarding all houses continues, but the increase in the disease is making it difficult to keep up with the work with a limited staff.

THE health board is rushing work on the Willow Park reconstruction camp which is being converted into a hospital exclusively for influenza patients. The undertaking has proven to be a big one, but is being carried out without delay and before the end of the week will likely be ready for the acceptance of patients. The alterations and improvements being made in the building is under the direct super-

Being Sorry

Being sorry won't relieve Sciatica, Lumbago, Swollen Joints, Stones in the Bladder, Gravel, etc. Gin Pills will! Use them.

50c. a box. Sold everywhere.



#3

"New Influenza Record for the City of Halifax," *Halifax Evening Mail*, October 29, 1918.

ALL TRAINS FROM EAST WILL BE INSPECTED TO PREVENT "FLU" SPREAD

In spite of the extraordinary precautions taken by city and provincial health authorities, the number of cases of Spanish influenza has increased rapidly in Winnipeg within the last 24 hours.

Since 3 o'clock Tuesday afternoon, three persons have died and 48 new cases of the disease have been reported to the city health department.

#4

["All Trains From East Will Be Inspected To Prevent 'Flu' Spread,"](#) *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, October 16, 1918.

Provincial Health Dept. Advises What To Do If It's Spanish Flu

The Interior News has received a circular issued by the provincial board of health, containing particulars regarding the epidemic of Spanish Influenza and

the general precautions to be taken, with the request that we give it some publicity. Here is what it says:—

“People are very much given to underrating the effect of this disease and to regard it more as a common cold. It is very infectious, and you owe it to yourself and to your neighbors to do all you can to avoid catching it. If you do catch it, your duty to your neighbors is to prevent them catching it from you.

“It begins as a common cold, headache, pains in the muscles, chills, feeling of cold in the head, soreness of the throat, fever.

“Keep warm, send for the doctor, and keep the other members of the family out of the room. If the children

complain, keep them at home, and remember, if care is not taken, that the after effects of the disease are the cause of the deaths.

“Isolation of the patient will prevent the spread of the disease. Avoid needless crowding; influenza is a crowd disease. Smother your coughs and sneezes; others do not want the germs you are trying to throw away.

“Your nose, not your mouth, was made to breathe through. Keep a clean mouth, clean skin, clean clothes. Open the windows, always, at home at night: at the office when practicable.

“Your fate may be in your own hands; wash your hands before eating. Do not use a napkin, towel, spoon, cup or glass which has been used by others and not thoroughly washed.

Remember, the danger is chiefly in the after effects.

#5

[“Provincial Health Dept. Advises What To Do If It's Spanish Flu,”](#) *Interior News*, October 19, 1918.

#1

Citizens Determined Flu Shall Not Spread

City officials are assured that spirit of order will be observed—street cars being fumigated daily and will continue to run—17 new cases

“The flu shall not spread.”

Saskatoon is as a unit in its determination to do everything possible to prevent Spanish influenza from becoming as serious an epidemic here as it has in many other Canadian cities. Over a hundred citizens rallied up the major and assistant-commissioner this morning regarding the action of the council in closing all public meetings and the schools, and of that number only one person registered a complaint. All of the others complimented the city officials upon their action and promised to see that the spirit of the order was lived up to in its entirety.

#2

Flu Ban Goes on Again; Schools Closed at Noon

Acting Medical Health Officer R.B.C. Thomson clamped on the ‘flu lid’ in Lethbridge as from noon today, Monday. So he informed the Herald at 10 o’clock this morning.

“A great many new cases have been reported this morning and there is no other course to take,” declared Dr. Thomson.

The Health Board met Saturday and [] on the advisability of a closing order. The matter was left in the hands of the Acting Medical Health Officer to take whatever action he deemed necessary. This morning he took action under the following section of the Order-in-Council of Oct. 17:

“As soon as Spanish Influenza or Epidemic influenza shows a disposition to spread in any city, town or village or municipal district, every Medical Health Officer shall immediately order the closing of all schools, churches, theatres, picture shows, public meetings and all other places within its jurisdiction where the public gather or congregate and shall prohibit unnecessary gatherings of people in stores, street corners or other public places.”

There are now about 100 housed in quarantine in the city. One death has occurred.

Dr. Thomson said he had no power to close the pool halls or stores.

#3

New Influenza Record for the City of Halifax

The Number of Cases Reported by Fifteen of the Doctors is 239.—Hospital Accommodation.

Halifax, October 29—A new record for influenza cases was recorded by the health authorities yesterday, a total of 239 cases being recorded by the health authorities doctors from nine o'clock yesterday up until six o'clock last night. There are yet a large number of reports to be received. The unexpected big jump in civilian cases in Halifax yesterday is likely to continue during the present week as, according to some medical men, the apex has not yet been reached. Since the disease was first discovered here there has been almost a continuous daily increase in the number of new cases, but the number reported yesterday is the largest for any single day yet. The civilian cases reported yesterday affect 129 homes or nearly two hundred families as in many instances more than one family reside in the same house. Fifty-three military cases were reported. The disease has reached the epidemic stage in Halifax. It is not confined to any particular portion of the city. It appears to be widespread as reports show that cases exist on Barrington, Allen, North Park, Shirley, Harris, Bloomfield, Merkle, Grafton, South, Blowers, South Kline, Dresden Row, Market, Morris, South Park, Brussels, Starr, Queen, Argyle, Lower Water, Henry, Sackville, Creighton, Robie, Cornwallis, Maynard, Brunswick, Maitland, Gottingen, North, John, and in many of the relief tenements on the Commons and the Exhibition grounds.

#4

All Trains From East Will Be Inspected To Prevent "Flu" Spread

In spite of the extraordinary precautions taken by city and provincial health authorities, the number of cases of Spanish influenza has increased rapidly in Winnipeg within the last 24 hours.

Since 3 o'clock Tuesday afternoon, three persons have died and 48 new cases of the disease have been reported to the city health department.

#5

Provincial Health Dept. Advises What To Do If It's Spanish Flu

The *Interior News* has received a circular issued by the provincial board of health, containing particulars regarding the epidemic of Spanish Influenza and the general precautions to be taken, with the request that we give it some publicity. Here is what it says:—

"People are very much given to underrating the effect of this disease and to regard it more as a common cold. It is very infectious, and you owe it to yourself and to your neighbors to do all you can to avoid catching it. If you do catch it, your duty to your neighbors is to prevent them catching it from you.

"It begins as a common cold, headache, pains in the muscles, chills, feeling of cold in the head, soreness of the throat, fever.

"Keep warm, send for the doctor, and keep the other members of the family out of the room. If the children complain, keep them at home, and remember, if care is not taken, that the after effects of the disease are the cause of the deaths.

"Isolation of the patient will prevent the spread of the disease. Avoid needless crowding; Influenza is a crowd disease. Smother your coughs and sneezes; others do not want the germs you are trying to throw away.

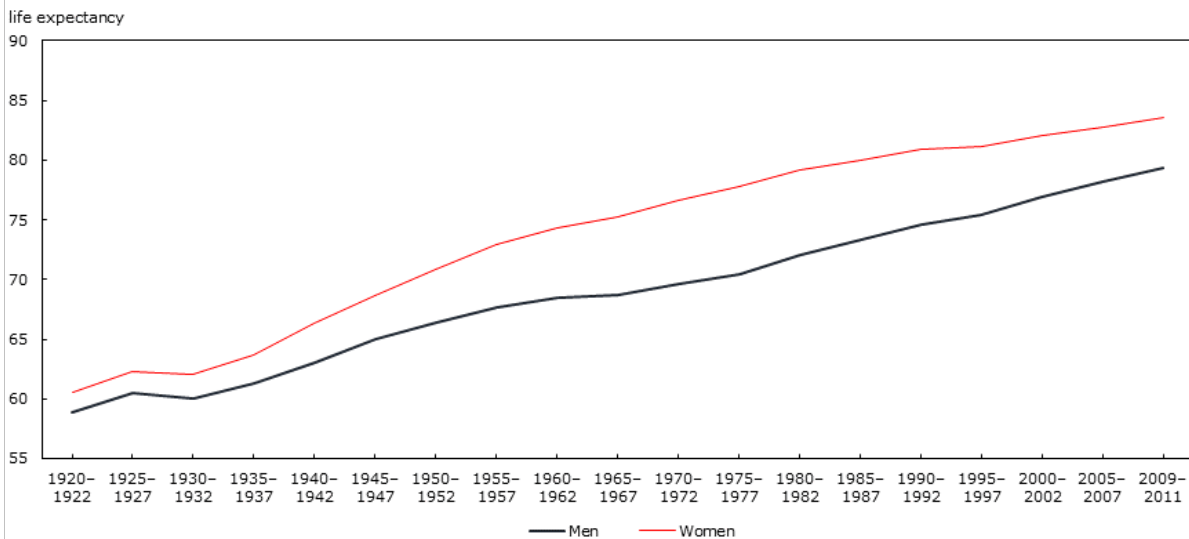
"Your nose, not your mouth, was made to breathe through. Keep a clean mouth, clean skin, clean clothes. Open the windows, always, at home at night: at the office when practicable.

"Your fate may be in your own hands; wash your hands before eating. Do not use a napkin, towel, spoon, cup or glass which has been used by others and not thoroughly washed.

Remember, the danger is chiefly in the after effects.

APPENDIX B: Life Expectancy and Childhood Mortality in Canada

Chart 1
Life expectancy at birth by sex, Canada, 1920–1922 to 2009–2011



Sources: Nagunár, *Longevity and historical life tables, 1920–1922 to 1965–1967*.
Statistics Canada, *Report on the demographic situation in Canada, 2001, 1970–1972 to 1990–1992*.
Statistics Canada, *Life tables, Canada, provinces and territories, 1995–1997 to 2009–2011*.

"Life Expectancy, 1920-1922 to 2009-2011," Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2016002-eng.htm>, accessed 13 November 2025.

Infant Mortality, Canada, 1921-1959

<i>Average (rate per 1,000 live births)</i>	<i>Infant deaths (total under 1 year of age)</i>
1921-25	99
1926-30	94
1931-35	76
1936-40	65
1941-45	56
1946-50	44
1951-55	35
1956-58	31
1958	30
1959	28

"Mortality statistics of childhood, Canadian Conference on Children." Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics. 1960. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/statcan/CS84-D-67A-1960.pdf, accessed 13 November 2025.

Average Annual Deaths among Children (under 20), 1926-1959
Moyenne annuelle de décès chez les enfants de moins de 20 ans, 1926-1959

Average — Moyenne	Total	Under 1 year — Moins d'un an	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19
Number — Nombre						
1926-30	36,245	22,063	6,770	2,687	1,980	2,745
1936-40	23,985	14,701	3,970	1,809	1,435	2,069
1946-50	21,802	15,644	2,712	1,178	867	1,402
1951-55	20,009	14,552	2,470	1,168	744	1,075
1956-58	19,589	14,365	2,289	1,114	752	1,069
1959	18,843	13,595	2,076	1,217	832	1,123
Rates per 1,000 population — Taux pour 1,000 habitants						
1926-30	8.7	93.3	7.8	2.5	1.9	2.9
1936-40	5.6	70.8	5.0	1.7	1.3	1.9
1946-50	4.5	49.0	2.4	1.0	0.8	1.3
1951-55	3.5	37.5	1.7	0.7	0.6	1.0
1956-58	2.9	33.5	1.4	0.6	0.5	0.9
1959	2.6	30.2	1.2	0.6	0.5	0.9
<i>P.c. reduction — P. 100 de la réduction</i> 1926-30—1959	69.8	67.6	84.7	74.8	74.2	70.5

"Mortality statistics of childhood, Canadian Conference on Children." Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics. 1960. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/statcan/CS84-D-67A-1960.pdf, accessed 13 November 2025.

Major Causes of Death among Children (Ages 1-19) 1933 and 1958
Principales causes de décès chez les enfants de 1-19 ans, 1933 et 1958

	Age (years) — Âge (années)									
	Total (1-19)		1-4		5-9		10-14		15-19	
	1933	1958	1933	1958	1933	1958	1933	1958	1933	1958
	Number of deaths — Nombre de décès									
Deaths — Total — Décès	9,428	5,065	4,220	2,149	1,667	1,093	1,422	766	2,119	1,057
Accidents	1,427	2,240	518	697	292	555	269	373	348	615
Motor vehicle — Dus à des véhicules à moteur	265	987	68	223	78	280	53	160	66	324
Other — Autre	1,162	1,253	450	474	214	275	216	213	282	291
Cancer	194	486	53	175	37	116	38	98	66	97
Pneumonia and influenza — Pneumonie et grippe	1,564	469	1,100	356	195	52	132	39	137	22
Congenital malformations — Malformations congénitales	99	382	67	224	19	80	5	41	8	37
Gastroenteric and communicable diseases — Gastro-entérite et maladies contagieuses	1,334	223	956	169	216	34	71	8	91	12
Rheumatic fever and heart disease — Rhumatisme articulaire aigu et maladies de coeur	435	75	46	8	91	13	140	21	158	33
Tuberculosis — Tuberculose	1,506	74	380	40	217	10	249	9	660	15
Appendicitis — Appendicite	647	50	122	14	199	12	174	6	152	18
Other causes — Autres causes	2,222	1,066	978	466	401	221	344	171	499	208
	Rate per 100,000 population — Taux pour 100,000 habitants									
Total	230	78	505	126	149	57	127	48	204	84
Accidents	35	35	62	41	26	29	24	23	34	49
Motor vehicle — Dus à des véhicules à moteur	7	15	8	13	7	15	5	10	6	26
Other — Autre	28	20	54	28	19	14	19	13	27	23
Cancer	5	8	6	10	3	6	3	6	6	8
Pneumonia and influenza — Pneumonie et grippe	38	7	132	21	17	3	12	2	13	2
Congenital malformations — Malformations congénitales	2	6	8	13	2	4	1	3	1	3
Gastroenteric and communicable diseases — Gastro-entérite et maladies contagieuses	33	4	114	10	19	2	6	1	9	1
Rheumatic fever and heart disease — Rhumatisme articulaire aigu et maladies de coeur	11	1	6	1	8	1	13	1	15	3
Tuberculosis — Tuberculose	37	1	46	2	20	1	22	1	64	1
Appendicitis — Appendicite	16	1	15	1	18	1	16	1	15	1
Other causes — Autres causes	54	16	117	27	36	12	31	10	48	17
	Percent — Pourcentage									
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Accidents	15	44	12	32	18	51	19	49	16	58
Motor vehicle — Dus à des véhicules à moteur	3	20	2	10	5	26	4	21	3	31
Other — Autre	12	25	10	22	13	25	15	28	13	27
Cancer	2	10	1	8	2	11	3	13	3	9
Pneumonia and influenza — Pneumonie et grippe	7	9	26	17	12	5	9	5	6	2
Congenital malformations — Malformations congénitales	1	8	2	10	1	7	1	5	1	4
Gastroenteric and communicable diseases — Gastro-entérite et maladies contagieuses	14	4	23	8	13	3	5	1	4	1
Rheumatic fever and heart disease — Rhumatisme articulaire aigu et maladies de coeur	5	2	1	1	5	1	10	3	7	3
Tuberculosis — Tuberculose	16	2	9	2	13	1	18	1	31	1
Appendicitis — Appendicite	7	1	3	1	12	1	12	1	7	2
Other causes — Autres causes	24	21	23	22	24	20	24	22	26	20

¹ Less than 1. — Moins de 1.

"Mortality statistics of childhood, Canadian Conference on Children." Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics. 1960. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/statcan/CS84-D-67A-1960.pdf, accessed 13 November 2025.

APPENDIX C: Curriculum Connections

BC:

Science for Citizens 11 (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/science/11/science-for-citizens>)

Law 12 (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/12/law-studies>)

AB:

Biology 20, 30 (https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en/pos/SCIBIO_20_30?id=11849d41-2b5b-41c9-a0c6-4a9970605163)

SK:

Law 30 (<https://curriculum.gov.sk.ca/CurriculumHome?id=514>)

History 30 (<https://curriculum.gov.sk.ca/CurriculumHome?id=182>)

Health Science 20 (<https://curriculum.gov.sk.ca/CurriculumHome?id=74>)

MB:

History 11 (https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/history_gr11/index.html)

Canadian Law 12 (<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/law/index.html>)

ON:

CHC2D Grade 10 Canadian History since World War I (<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/canworld910curr2018.pdf#page=109>)

CHV20 Grade 10 Civics and Citizenship (<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/curriculum/canadian-and-world-studies/courses/chv20>)

SNC4M Grade 12 Science (https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/2009science11_12.pdf#page=226)

QC:

History of Quebec and Canada Secondary III and IV (<https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/preschool-elementary-and-secondary-schools/programs-training-evaluation/quebec-education-program/secondary/history-quebec-canada#c241977>)

Secondary Science and Technology, Cycle Two (<https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/preschool-elementary-and-secondary-schools/programs-training-evaluation/quebec-education-program/secondary/science-technology>)

NS:

Law 12 (<https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/english-programs/course/law-12>)

Canadian History 11 (<https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/english-programs/course/canadian-history-11>)

NB:

Canadian History 121/2/3 (<https://curriculum.nbed.ca/learning-areas/high-school-block/humanities/canadian-history-121-2-3/>)

Law 120 (<https://curriculum.nbed.ca/learning-areas/high-school-block/humanities/law-120/>)

PE:

Canadian Law LAW531A (<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-and-early-years/social-studies-curriculum>)

Biology 521A (<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-and-early-years/science-curriculum>)

NL:

Social Studies 1202 (https://enlightened.gov.nl.ca/ords/r/clcc/public/curriculum-view?p50_id=805&p50_doc_section=HOME)

YK – uses the BC curriculum

NT – uses the BC curriculum

NU:

Social Studies 10-1 (https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-10/Nunavut_Approved_Curriculum_and_Teaching_Resources_2024-2025_v2.pdf)

Health Studies, Grade 9 (<https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/jk-12-school-curriculum/health-studies>)