CHAPTER 9

Changing Ways of Life

When do you think you will get your first job? Jimmie Gray was only 8 years old when he started selling newspapers on a Winnipeg street corner.

“Extra! Extra! Read all about it!” shouted the newsboys in August 1914. World War I had been declared in Europe. Soon marching bands were parading through the streets of every town. Their purpose was to encourage young men to become soldiers and to go overseas to fight.

During the war, newspaper headlines announced thousands of deaths in Europe. Newspapers also described new inventions and changes happening in Canada. One day, a newspaper headline declared that women had just won the right to vote. Attitudes toward women were finally changing.

When he was older, Jimmie Gray wrote a book about his childhood. He recalled: “What a marvellous, exciting, and wonder-filled time it was for small boys! There were things to do and places to go, and discoveries to make with automobiles, motion pictures, airplanes, and radio.”
Before 1900, most Canadians made their living from the resources around them. Many people lived on farms or in small villages. After 1900, some people moved to urban areas to look for work. Here, ways of life were very different. There were new kinds of jobs in factories, shops, and offices. People used the new products that were made in factories—everything from cars to breakfast cereals. In this chapter, you will explore how ways of life changed during and after World War I.

Some of the biggest changes affected women. During this time, they got paying jobs, new rights, and new responsibilities.

The newspapers that Jimmie Gray sold had photos of soldiers marching, like this one. It was taken in 1915 and shows a troop from Saskatoon.

**Inquiring Minds**

Here are some questions to guide your inquiry for this chapter:

- In what ways did World War I begin to change Canadians’ identity?
- How would life be different if the Famous Five had not succeeded?

**Critical Inquiry TIP**

**Retrieving**

As you read this chapter, jot down any information that might help you answer the Inquiring Minds questions.

**words matter!**

**World War I** (1914–1918) was fought mainly in Europe and involved many countries, including Canada. It is also called the Great War. More than 60,000 Canadians died fighting in World War I.
Claire’s Inquiry

When I look at pictures of myself from a few years ago, I cannot believe how much I have changed. Photos are a good way to remember what life was like in the past. Our teacher showed us how to browse through online collections of old photographs. I saw photos of people living in Canada around 100 years ago! I thought these two pictures were really interesting.

The photo on the left was taken in the small town of Didsbury, Alberta, in 1911. The one below was taken in Edmonton in 1918.

Compare the ways of life of the women in these two photos.
Making Meaning of Historical Photographs

Pictures can tell us a lot about the past and about how people lived. Some of the photos Claire saw online had captions, or sentences that give more information, such as when and where the photo was taken.

Sometimes a caption tells us what the photo means. Remember, though, that this is just what the caption writer thinks. Other people may think the photo means something different. This is because everyone has a unique point of view.

Look at the photo at the bottom of page 248. Then read these two captions:

1. Times were good for the factories of Canada.
2. Women workers are overworked and underpaid.

What different points of view do these two captions show? Who might have written them?

Practise the Skill

1. Look at the photo on this page. Why do you think the photographer took this picture?
2. Write a caption that might accompany this photograph.
How Did World War I Change Life in Canada?

At the beginning of the 1900s, many people moved to cities to look for better-paying jobs. Men worked in factories, or as carpenters, bricklayers, or painters. Some women worked as cooks and maids. Others worked in sewing factories.

When World War I began, some Canadian factories began making supplies and equipment for the soldiers. Because of the fighting in Europe, much of the best farmland there was destroyed. Europeans needed Canada to send them grain and meat. Canadian meat-packing plants started canning meat and sending it overseas.

The war kept Canada’s farmers and factory workers very busy, and for a short time some made money. Unfortunately, there were not always enough jobs for everyone. Some jobs did not pay much.

**Voices of Canada**

**Families with Low Incomes**

I visited some truly needy families. It was a tearful sight to see those six, seven, or eight children, almost naked in a frigid home, heated by a stove filled with old papers, those beds without mattresses, a single flannel blanket on the springs... Mothers... were exhausted, hungry...

*Toussaint Stephen Langevin, a Montréal doctor*
Factory owners, businessmen, and government officials became very wealthy during the war. Jimmie Gray was amazed when he got a paper route in the wealthy part of Winnipeg.

The people who lived in houses such as this one may have owned factories or stores. They often built summer cottages on lakes away from the city.

**Voices of Canada**

*Families with High Incomes*

There were no houses. There were only castles, huge castles three full storeys in height... all, certainly with dozens of rooms. Sometimes, a maid allowed Gray into the front hallway at collection time. He remembers, There were richly carpeted staircases, living rooms full of upholstered chairs. I wondered what it would be like to slide down such shiny banisters.

*Jimmie Gray*

**Thinking It Through**

During this time, many Francophones in Québec left their farms to find work in the city factories. Because most of the factory owners were Anglophones, Francophones often had to learn English to get a job or to be promoted. But in their homes, churches, and schools, they kept their French culture and identity alive.

- What do you think the hardest thing would be about learning a new language? What would be the best thing?
- How important do you think it is to keep your culture, language, and traditions? What can people do to achieve this?

**More About...**

*Cars*

Many city people started buying cars. New laws were made. Cars driving after dark needed headlights and speeding was forbidden. For many years, cars shared the same streets and roads as horse-drawn carts and buggies. What problems do you think this caused?

There were very few paved roads. Cars, such as this one near Milo, Alberta, often got stuck in the mud.
New Jobs for Women

When the war started, thousands of men signed up. Jimmie’s father could not because he had lost an arm in an accident. But Jimmie’s uncle went to fight in France against the German army. His aunt and young cousins could not survive on the small amount of money the government provided. So Jimmie’s aunt got a job in a store.

Before the war, married women were discouraged from working in stores. But because many men were away, some women were hired to work outside the home. Some even got jobs in factories. They made guns, ammunition, and airplanes for the war. This was dangerous work.

Some women from cities went to help farm women bring in the harvest because there were not enough men.

35,000 women worked in factories such as the one in this photograph. What can you tell about the factories by looking at the picture? How might a worker in this factory describe her day?
Patriotism

World War I changed how some Canadians felt about their country. They were proud of their soldiers, and they were proud that Canada was fighting for freedom. During the war, many Canadians showed their patriotism by doing things such as turning empty public spaces into gardens. Classrooms competed to see which one could grow the most food in their Victory Gardens. These were vegetable gardens planted on playing fields or empty lots. The food was then canned and sent to Canadian soldiers overseas.

Voices of Canada

Knitting for Soldiers

Like so many women during the war, Jimmie’s mother knit socks and mittens for the soldiers overseas. Schoolchildren were expected to help out, too. Great rolls of wool were sent to schools. The boys separated the large rolls into smaller balls, and the girls did the knitting.

Jimmie remembers:

The beginners were started on scarves and every now and then a little Grade 3 girl would become so fouled up in her scarf-knitting that she would start everybody around to giggling. Then her work would all be unravelled and she’d start over again.

Schoolchildren in Barons, Alberta, show their patriotism on “Flag Raising Day” in 1919. They practised songs such as “The Maple Leaf Forever,” “Rule Britannia,” and “God Save the King.” They sang these last two songs because Canada was part of the British Empire during and after World War I.

words matter!
Patriotism means showing support or loyalty toward a country.

Thinking It Through

- Why do you think women were not allowed to have certain jobs before the war? Are there some jobs that women today are not allowed to have? Why do you think this is so?
- Today, women fight in wars, too. What attitudes do you think had to change for this happen?
How Did Canadians Feel About the War?

The Great War caused many citizens of our country to ask: “Who are we? What do we believe in? What are we fighting for?” Many people of British descent supported Britain during the war. They eagerly volunteered to fight, at least at the beginning of the war. The Toronto Globe newspaper described the scene when a crowd was told in August, 1914, that war had been declared:

“For a moment the thousands stood still. Then a cheer broke. It was not for the war, but for the King, Britain, and... victory. Toronto is British. Heads were bowed and the crowd began to sing ‘God Save the King. ‘[Then the] citizens joined... in that old song, ‘Rule Britannia.’”
Some of my classmates saw a TV show about Talbot Papineau, an important Québécois who died fighting in World War I. Talbot believed that the war was for a good cause. But not everyone in Québec agreed with him—especially his cousin, the newspaper editor, Henri Bourassa.

Over to You

1. Should the government force people to enlist when there are not many volunteers to be soldiers? If so, should there be exceptions if some types of workers, such as farmers, are needed at home?

2. Can a citizen disagree with a war that his or her country is involved in and still be considered patriotic? Explain your answer.

The Vandoos were brave, successful Francophone volunteer soldiers from Québec. But the Canadian government would not let Francophone soldiers fight together. They were put under English-speaking commanders. They did not have Catholic priests to be with them when they were injured or dying in battle. Do you think these decisions affected whether Québec supported the war?

The name Vandoos comes from the word “vingt-deux,” French for “22.” The men formed the 22nd regiment.

Many decisions in Canada affected how Francophones viewed the war:
We were asked to fight in Europe for the British Empire’s ideas of justice and freedom. But I agree with Henri Bourassa. We Francophones were having to fight for our own freedoms and rights here in Canada. Ontario was closing down French-language schools!

In 1917, the Canadian government introduced conscription. This law forced men to go to Europe to fight. Québec did not believe this was right. I say “NON” to conscription. It is always wrong to be forced to go to war. I agree with our former Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier. He says that conscription is against the spirit of cooperation that we had at the time of Confederation.
What Challenges Did Canadians Face During This Time?

Conditions in Cities

Life in Canada’s cities brought new challenges to the thousands of people who moved there in search of work. Factories polluted the air. Some parts of some cities had no electricity or running water.

Fire was another big problem in cities. Many buildings were made of wood and were built close together, so fire spread quickly. This photo was taken in Montréal.

In the crowded and often unclean conditions in cities, diseases spread easily. After the war, some soldiers brought a new and deadly disease back from Europe with them. It was called the Spanish influenza, or the flu. It spread quickly, and millions of people in the world died from it. In fact, more people died during the spread of the Spanish flu than during the war itself.

The photo on the left was taken in 1918. Many people, such as these men, wore face masks so they would not catch the Spanish flu. Some provinces made everyone wear a mask. Today, there are still diseases, such as SARS, that spread easily and quickly. Why does our modern world make it even easier for these diseases to travel?
Conditions in Factories

Not all children went to school during this time. Many never got to play, either. They had to work. Even though child labour was against the law in most provinces by the time of the Great War, greedy employers and desperately poor parents found it easy to break the law. Often, children were sent to work under terrible conditions for very little pay.

Voices of Canada

A Child Worker

This interview was done between a government official and Joseph Larkins, a child worker. “Q” means the official’s question. “A” means Joseph’s answer.

Q. How old are you?
A. I am 11 years.
Q. What is the matter with your hand?
A. I got hurt in the machinery.
Q. How?
A. It got caught in the rollers... of a cracker machine—a biscuit machine.
Q. How much wages did they give you?
A. A dollar a week at first, and then $1.25.
Q. What were you doing at the machinery?
A. I was brushing the dough off as it came through.
Q. Did you lose any fingers?
A. I lost one.
Q. Did you lose any of the joints of the others?
A. I think I will lose a second finger.

There is no further information about Joseph or about what was done to help him.

The working conditions in factories were terrible for women as well as for children. One day a woman named Nellie McClung led the premier of Manitoba into a dirty, noisy basement sewing factory. Here, immigrant women worked ten hours a day, six days a week, for very little pay. “Let me out of here. I’m choking,” he gasped. Then why didn’t he outlaw such working conditions? Nellie wondered.

Thinking It Through

- Joseph was 11 when he worked at the factory. Jimmie was 8 when he got a paper route. At what age can children legally work in Alberta? Do you agree that this is a good age? Why or why not?
- Many women who had worked during the war now had to give up their jobs to the returning men. Do you think this would happen today? Explain.
Attitudes Toward Women

It was not easy for women like Nellie McClung to make changes in society. Part of the reason was because women did not have much power. The first thing that had to change was the attitudes many men had toward women.

Women’s Roles

How would you feel if you were not allowed to play your favourite sport just because you were a girl? Growing up in the late 1800s, Nellie McClung was not allowed to play sports as her brothers did.

Nellie learned that there were many things she was not allowed to do because she was a girl. For example, girls were discouraged from attending university.

Voices of Canada

Nellie McClung

At 16, Nellie became a schoolteacher. She bought a football and organized noon-hour games. She wanted the children to work off their energy and learn to play as a team. Nellie played with them. Nellie remembered:

One day, one of the girls came to me almost in tears, and told me that her mother... and [other women] had said that I should not play football: it wasn’t a ladies’ game...

Nellie explained her reasons for letting the children play the game. She found out that she had a special skill. She could convince people to change their minds.

Nellie became determined that girls and women have new opportunities. She wanted to change attitudes and laws to make life better for mothers and their children.

Skill Smart

Imagine you are in Nellie McClung’s class. Write a persuasive letter to your parents to convince them to let boys and girls play football together.
**Women’s Identities**

At the beginning of World War I, women were not considered citizens of Canada. In fact, women were not even allowed to vote. Married women could not own property or money. The law said that homes, farms, and even children belonged only to the husband. Even though they could not own property, married women worked hard for their families.

**Voices of Canada**

**Farm Women**

There is no harder worked woman than the woman on the farm. Not only must she perform her duties as housewife, not only must she nurse and care for her children, but she... usually is the general servant of the farm itself. Her working day is the length of time she can manage to stand upon her legs.

*The Western Producer, Oct. 23, 1924*

Have you ever heard a story of something unfair happening to someone? Did it make you want to take action? An Albertan named Emily Murphy had this experience. She met a woman whose husband had left her and their children. He sold their farm, but the law did not force him to share the money with his wife. She and her children now had no money.

Murphy was determined that this law must be changed. With Nellie McClung, she tried to change people’s attitudes. They worked to convince people that women should be allowed to participate in government. That way, women could help change unfair laws. They could also pass new laws that would improve the lives of families on farms and in cities.

**Skill Smart**

- Look back at the inquiry questions on page 247. Check which ones you have found answers to. Take time to jot down your answers, along with notes for sources of information.
How Did Women Help Change Canada?

Have you ever heard someone say “Many doors are open to you”? An “open door” means an opportunity. Today, Canadians have many more opportunities than they did 100 years ago. How did this change?

Murphy, McClung, and many other brave women in Canada began fighting for change by trying to win the right to vote for women. The struggle took great courage and determination. Many people were afraid that allowing women to vote was too big a change. Some people made fun of the suffragists. They even accused the women of neglecting their children. But McClung, Murphy, and others believed that women should have a voice in government. They could then make the future better for their children.

words matter!

Suffrage means the right to vote. People who fought for women’s right to vote were called suffragists or suffragettes.

These suffragists are protesting in front of the House of Commons in London, England, in 1924. Women in Canada were not alone in their fight to win the right to vote. What does this tell you about the importance of this struggle?

Voices of Canada

Nellie McClung

Disturbers are never popular—nobody ever really loved an alarm clock in action—no matter how grateful they may have been afterwards for its kind services.

Nellie McClung

What do you think Nellie McClung meant when she said this?
The Right to Vote

By 1916, women in the Prairie provinces were celebrating their victory. They had won the right to vote! By the end of the war in 1918, women across Canada were allowed to vote for the governments in Ottawa and in most provinces.

Around the same time as they won the vote, women were allowed to take on new jobs and responsibilities. For example, a few women were allowed to train as doctors. Emily Murphy became a judge. But she was soon to discover that not all doors were open yet for the women of Canada.

More About...

The Vote

Not all women were allowed to vote by 1918. Neither were all men. For example, the laws of Canada did not permit Aboriginal people or people from Asia to vote. But over the years, attitudes changed, people fought hard, and new laws were passed.

1940: Québec women get the right to vote in provincial elections.
1947: East Indian and Chinese Canadians get the right to vote.
1949: Japanese Canadians get the right to vote.
1960: First Nations get the right to vote.
1971: Young people between 18 and 20 get the right to vote.

Voices of Canada

The Importance of Voting

Getting the right to vote allows people to participate as citizens in their country. It makes people feel like they belong. “When I voted I felt like I could finally join the human race.”

Japanese resident of British Columbia, 1949

Dr. Emily Jennings Stowe (1831-1903)

In 1867, Emily Jennings, an Ontario woman, graduated from an American medical school. She had not been permitted to study medicine in Canada because she was a woman. When she returned to Canada, Stowe became active in organizations that fought for women’s rights, especially the right to vote.

Marie Lacoste Gérin-Lajoie (1867–1945)

Marie Lacoste Gérin-Lajoie once led 400 women to ask the premier of Québec for the right to vote. She opposed the old laws that said married women could not own property or be their children’s legal guardians. In 1940, women in Québec became full citizens with the right to vote.
The Persons Case

After she became a judge, Emily Murphy heard things like “You are not even a person. You have no right to hold office.” A law at the time said that certain important government jobs could only be held by “qualified persons.” Most people thought this meant that only men could hold these jobs. But some Albertans thought that Emily should become a senator in Ottawa. Was this possible? Were women qualified persons? Murphy decided to find out what the law really meant. She asked Nellie McClung and three other women—Henrietta Edwards, Irene Parlby, and Louise McKinney—to help her. Here is a part of her letter to them:

“For the several years past the women of Canada, owing to what appeared to be a hopeless situation, took... little interest in this matter of the interpretation of the word ‘Persons.’ Our action in appealing to the Supreme Court of Canada... (gives to) women of all parties a renewed hope... Nothing can prevent our winning.”

In 1927 the Supreme Court of Canada answered the five women. It said that the Fathers of Confederation had not meant the word “persons” to include women.

The Famous Five, as the group was now called, was disappointed. But these women did not give up. They asked the highest court in the British Empire to decide. On October 18, 1929, the decision was announced: “[T]heir lordships have come to the conclusion that the word ‘person’ includes... male and female... ” The Famous Five had helped to bring about change for Canadian women.
The Famous Five

I know what Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy did to fight for women's rights. My classmates and I wondered what work the other three women in the Famous Five did. Our teacher gave us this list of questions to help us do some research.

1. Which member of the Famous Five are you most interested in researching? Why?
2. What was her childhood like?
3. Why do you think she became interested in women's rights?
4. What jobs did she do in her life?
5. Did she become part of the government? In what position?
6. List changes that she helped to make. Include any organizations she started.
7. Does she deserve to be famous? By herself or as part of the Famous Five?

Thinking It Through

- Do you think the suffragists succeeded in making the future better for their children? Explain.
- Think of a situation today which shows that women are still treated differently than men are. Why do you think these situations still exist?
What About Other Citizens and Their Rights?

After the Famous Five victory, were all Canadians treated fairly and equally?

The work of the Famous Five was an important step in making Canada a fair or just country. These women proved that old laws and old attitudes could be changed. But women still struggled for equal and fair treatment. So did many other groups in Canada.

Lieutenant Frederick Loft

When First Nations soldiers returned from World War I, they were frustrated that they could not vote. Aboriginal people were awarded more than fifty medals for bravery and heroism during the war. They became known as some of the best snipers and scouts because of their traditional knowledge and skills. Lieutenant Frederick Loft of the Mohawk First Nation said, “... in the war we have performed dutiful service to our country and we have the right to claim and demand justice and fair play.” Loft helped organize a national Aboriginal group to fight for the right to vote and to control reserve lands.

Thérèse Casgrain

Although Casgrain came from a rich Québécois family and married a wealthy man, she worked hard to get more rights for women and people with low incomes. She was inspired by stories of Québec women helping others in the past. She said, “The charitable activity of our women was particularly necessary during the frequent epidemics that ravished Québec.”

Casgrain remembers her mother making fancy gift baskets for the poor every Christmas. “[My family] never dreamed, however, of trying to find out why these people were in need.” Casgrain spent her life trying to discover and change the causes of poverty.
People can work together to make life better for themselves and others. In 1926, two student nurses in Calgary cut their hair short. It was more comfortable and practical, but they were fired for doing it. Then, thirty other nurses cut their hair. Their vacation was cancelled until their hair grew back. The thirty nurses quit. Sixty more nurses cut their hair. Finally the rule was changed.

Mary Two-Axe Earley

In 1979, Mary Two-Axe Earley, a Mohawk, won the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case. Mary was honoured for her long struggle to make life better for First Nations women. Before 1985, when an Aboriginal woman married a non-Aboriginal man, the law said she lost the right to live on the reserve. But Aboriginal men who married Aboriginal women did not lose their rights. Mary married a non-Aboriginal man and had to leave her home on the Kahnawake reserve. For 25 years, she wrote letters and made presentations to the government. Finally, the law was changed. In 1985 Mary became the first woman in Canada to regain her Aboriginal rights. When she died, she was buried on her home reserve.

Making a Difference

The Victorian Order of Nurses

In Canadian cities in the early 1900s, overcrowding and polluted water and air often made babies and children unhealthy. There were very few doctors and nurses in the rapidly growing cities. Not many people could afford to get medical care. Where could mothers turn for help? Women like Henrietta Muir Edwards of the Famous Five helped start the Victorian Order of Nurses, or the VON. In cities, these nurses gave advice and helped mothers keep their children healthy. They also travelled to small communities to bring health care to families.

Are voting and making laws the only ways to bring about changes?
Build Your Skills!

Make Meaning of Historical Photographs
This photograph was taken around 1914, or near the beginning of World War I. What can you tell from the photograph? How do you think the man is feeling? How do you think the child is feeling? Write two different captions for this picture and explain the points of view that each caption shows.

Honour Five Canadians
In 1999, a group of Albertans had a monument built to remember and honour the Famous Five. Other famous Canadians are honoured by having schools or streets named after them. Brainstorm a list of five Canadians who deserve to be remembered. Explain each person’s contribution and why he or she deserves to be honoured. What would be an appropriate way to honour each of these Canadians? Which of the five do you think is the most honourable?

Imagine the Past
Imagine that you were born 100 years ago. Write a letter to a friend describing what you do every day, what you want to be when you grow up, and what the future probably holds for you.

Research Ways of Life
Choose one aspect of the Canadian way of life between 1900 and 1920. It could be entertainment, recreation, fashion, food, work, or school. Use the Internet or library to research your topic. Share your findings by creating a collage. You could also use a paint-and-draw program.
In this chapter, you learned that certain events can change the way people think or live. Think of an event or idea that caused you to change. Did you move to a new place? Did you read a book that gave you new information? Draw two pictures, one before and one after the change. Write captions to explain the pictures. Add the pictures and captions to your Canada Collection.

### Positive
- World War I made some people feel proud of their country.
- There were more jobs and cities grew. Factories, electricity, running water, and cars made life easier for some people.
- People such as the Famous Five helped to make lives better, especially for women. Women finally won the right to vote. Later, other groups won the right to vote, too.

### Negative
- During the war, 60,000 Canadian soldiers died, and many were wounded.
- Many people were forced to work in terrible conditions in factories.
- Crowded cities made diseases spread easily.

When I looked at old photographs, I saw that life in Canada changed a lot around the time of World War I. I made a Positive/Negative Chart to show some of the changes that happened.