Approximately one out of every seven Canadians is considered to be living in poverty. (Canada Without Poverty)

A report by Campaign 2000, released in fall 2014, found that 1,331,530 children (19.1% of Canadian children) were living in poverty in 2012. That is an increase from 1,066,150 (15.8% of Canadian children) who were living in poverty in 1989 (Campaign 2000).

The Campaign 2000 report also found that four in ten Aboriginal children live in poverty. (Campaign 2000)

The 2014 HungerCount report by Food Banks Canada found that 841,191 Canadians rely on food banks every month in order to get enough food for themselves and their families. (Food Banks Canada)

36% of those who rely on food banks in Canada are children. (Food Banks Canada)

According to Food Banks Canada, 47% of children in Nunavut “don’t know where their next meal is coming from.” (Food Banks Canada)

In 1989, Canadian Members of Parliament voted unanimously to end child poverty in Canada by 2000. (Toronto Star)

3.3 million Canadian individuals and families are considered to be living in “precarious” housing. This means the housing they live in is unaffordable, overcrowded, or the building is below acceptable standards for condition or maintenance. (Canada Without Poverty)

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Canada’s poverty rate is slightly higher than the average among all the 34 developed countries in the OECD. The average poverty rate is 11.3%; Canada’s poverty rate is 11.9%. (OECD)

Food Banks Canada found that 841,191 Canadians rely on food banks every month, 36% of those are children. Photo credit to Carlos Osorio from Getty Images.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

KEY TERMS

Poverty line—A minimum income amount needed to afford the basic necessities of life, such as food and housing. A person who earns less than this amount in income is considered to be living in at least some degree of poverty.

Shackles—Cuffs and chains affixed to one’s arms or legs that restrain a person, similar to handcuffs. A metaphor for something that holds people back.
THemes and course connections

- Themes: Global Issues, Local Issues, Politics, Poverty
- Course Connections: English, Social Sciences and the Humanities

Materials

- Front board
- Student journals or note paper
- Writing utensils

Specific expectations and learning goals

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in writing, orally or visually.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express and defend a position on an issue.

Discuss

1. How would you define poverty? What does it mean to experience poverty? What stereotypes are there of poverty?
2. How might experiencing poverty as a child affect an individual in adulthood?
3. According to the article, the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child at Harvard University found that stresses related to poverty—"overcrowding, noise, substandard housing, separation from parent(s), exposure to violence"—can generate neurotoxins that damage a child’s developing brain. How does this study relate to the effect of residential schools on Aboriginal people? How has it created a lasting impact on generations of young Aboriginals?
4. Do you think it is possible to eradicate poverty in the world? In your country? In your community? If so, what steps should be taken?

Dive deeper

Note: This section will require accessibility to a projector and/or laptop to view online material and videos incorporated into the lesson.

To begin show students the graphic comic strip, On a Plate: A short story about privilege by Toby Morris. Read it as a class.

http://thewireless.co.nz/articles/the-pencilword-on-a-plate

Hold a class discussion using the following questions:

- Do you think the economic status of Richard’s and Paula’s family affected their development into adulthood? If so, how? Will their development affect their children? If so, what may be the consequences?
- Provide examples of how poverty or wealth can affect the different stages in our lives.
- What does poverty look like to you? What do you think child poverty looks like in your community?
- Have you heard about Canada’s pledge to end child poverty?
- Explain.

Share with students that on January 30, 1989 every single member of Canada’s Federal Parliament made a pledge to end child poverty in Canada. January 30, 2015 marks twenty-five years since the promise to end child poverty was made, since then child poverty has increased by 15.8%.

Tell students they will be viewing different clips discussing the 1989 pledge. Prior to viewing provide students with the questions below. These will be their focus questions throughout the activity. Instruct students to jot down responses, notes and/or questions they may have while viewing the clips.

- Whose perspective in being presented in video?
- What is their stance on child poverty?
- What is the stance on the pledge to end child poverty?

Note: All videos are provided by the organization Keep the Promise Canada.

- On November 24, 1989 Member of Parliament (MP) Ed Broadbent addressed the Canadian House of Commons on his motion to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000: https://youtu.be/OQIC6YQgDe8
- What child poverty means to kids: https://youtu.be/iSja87uCLlc
- Listen up, Canada, we need to talk: https://youtu.be/EPlC3zl5uJA

Hold a brief discussion with students by taking up the questions posted above and addressing any questions they may have post-viewing.

Next, organize the class into groups of two to three students and provide each group with one sheet of chart paper. Instruct students to write “End Child Poverty” in the centre of their sheets. Then, ask students to brainstorm ways to end child poverty in their community and write their ideas around the central topic. For example, providing temporary housing for families who do not have a permanent home.

Allow the brainstorm session to last about 10 minutes and then have each group take turns presenting their ideas to the rest of the class.

Campaign 2000 is a cross-Canada public education movement to build Canadian awareness and support for the 1989 resolution to end child poverty in Canada. Students can take action and join the movement by writing a letter to all the federal party leaders and/or their local MP. A sample letter is provided at the link below:

www.campaign2000.ca/takeaction.html