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.

Core Skill Sets:
These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource.
Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at [www.we.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/](http://www.we.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/).

Key Terms
- [American Revolutionary War](#)—the conflict that occurred from 1775 to 1783 in which 13 British colonies revolted against Great Britain and declared independence as the United States of America
- [Residential schools](#)—a system of schools set up by the Canadian government and run by religious institutions that forcibly removed Indigenous children from their homes and tried to indoctrinate them to replace their Indigenous culture with Western Christian ways of life
- [Underground Railroad](#)—a series of secret escape routes and hiding places African American slaves used to escape to Canada during the 1800s
- [Internment](#)—the imprisonment of a large group of people without a trial

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- [Hamilton: An American Musical](#) is a musical created by composer Lin-Manuel Miranda that tells the life of American founding father Alexander Hamilton through hip-hop and rap. It debuted in New York 2015 and quickly became a Broadway success. The musical is widely acclaimed for its powerful lyrics and its depiction of American history using a racially diverse cast—something rare in the history of Broadway. ([New York Times](#))
- Lack of diversity has been a longstanding problem in American theatre. Since the Tony Awards (awards for outstanding work in American theatre) were founded in 1947, 95.3 per cent of all nominees have been white. For the Academy Awards, the rate is 96.4 per cent. ([Forbes](#))
- [Billy Bishop Goes to War](#) was created by John Gray and Eric Peterson, and is one of Canada's most popular and widely produced musicals. It debuted in Vancouver in 1978 and depicts the life of Billy Bishop, a fighter pilot in the First World War. The musical questions the nature of heroism and the sacrifices made over the course of history. ([Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia](#))
- Indian Residential Schools were a system of boarding schools that the government set up and sponsored between the 1880s and 1986, when the last school closed. During this time, an estimated 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from their families and indoctrinated with lessons about Western and Christian ways of life. Many children were abused and forced to give up their Indigenous culture. Many more died because of deplorable living conditions. ([University of British Columbia; CBC](#))
- The Underground Railroad was an extensive, secret network of escape routes and hiding places that African American slaves used to make their way from the United States to Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia during the 1800s. Guides who knew the routes were called conductors, and helped slaves find shelter and safe houses along the way. ([Black History Canada](#))
- [Nellie McClung](#) was a Canadian politician, writer and suffragette who fought for the rights of women in Canada. She and her colleagues, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney and Irene Parlby, became known as the Famous Five after they won the Persons Case, a landmark legal case that recognized women as "qualified person" who could serve in the Senate. ([The Nellie McClung Foundation](#))
THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

• Themes: Education and Local Issues
• Course Connections: The Arts, English and Canadian and World Studies

MATERIALS

• Front board
• Paper and writing utensils
• Computer/tablet with Internet access and video capability

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:
• Investigate Canadian historical narratives
• Explore the need to make Canadian history more relevant for youth
• Create art work for a historical narrative from a diverse lens
to think critically

DISCUSS

1. In your opinion, why aren't young Canadians excited about their own history?
2. Do you think the current method of teaching history in schools is relevant for students?
3. Does Canadian popular culture and mainstream media accurately reflect the cultural diversity in the country?
4. What perspective does history typically come from? Does this make history unapproachable?
5. The Global Voices article states “faces on our stage represent the faces in our community.” How will a shift in creating historical narratives with a diverse cultural and artistic perspective allow all Canadians to want to engage with our histories?

DIVE DEEPER

1. In groups of three, ask students to discuss and write a short response for the question: Is the history you study in school relevant or relatable? Ask students to consider why history is taught as a subject and what would make historical study more engaging and enjoyable for the majority of youth?
2. Read the Global Voices article “Canada’s unwritten smash hit history musical” and discuss the following questions with students. Share the video “Hamilton Clips: Hip Hop Musical About Making of America” www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOdWU-EnOEk (1:30).
   a. Why was the historical musical Hamilton well received by Canadian and American youth alike?
   b. How was the musical relevant for the youth? What changes did Hamilton make to become more engaging and relatable?
   c. Why is history so often unappealing to youth in its current form of study?
   d. How can the historical narrative change from being male white dominated to culturally diverse?
   e. Why is it important to see yourself present within your own local histories?

3. As a class, brainstorm a list of relevant historical stories that students find interesting. Have a discussion about the key event or person in your local history to learn why students found this story appealing. Ask students, how do you relate to this story on a personal level? Do they picture themselves in Canadian history or is the purpose of learning about the history just a mandatory school requirement. Would they spend time outside of school reading, watching documentaries or films or listening to podcasts in their personal time to learn more?

4. In groups of three or four, ask students to explore one event or person from Canadian history they found appealing. Students should use textbooks, the Internet and oral stories to collect information about the event or person they are discovering.

5. Ask students to write a short story, song, poem or play about the historical events with relevant factual information. Students will have the opportunity to present and share their piece with the rest of the class.

6. To reflect on the process of creating the historical art form, ask students to explore the following reflection questions:
   a. Ask students, how the historical story they are presenting within the art form be relatable for youth in communities across Canada whether rural, urban, central, northern, eastern or western Canada?
   b. What can they add into the creation of the art form to engage youth to want to discover more about Canadian history?
   c. What makes a historical event or person relevant for youth?
   d. How can you ensure that the dramatic art form is historically accurate and represents the true story while honouring a diverse perspective and society?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES