

# MINNIE H. BOWEN'S

Canada

Teacher's Workbook  
For elementary school



**MINNIE H. BOWEN  
AND THE CANADIAN FLAG**

# Quebec School Training Program

**Geography, History and Citizenship Education Program**

/ Grade 6

**Society Under Study**

/ Quebec society circa 1905

**Competency 2**

/ Interpret changes in a society and on its territory

**Learning Outcomes**

/ Individuals who have had an influence on these changes

// *Minnie H. Bowen*

/ Events that have had an impact on these changes

// *Federation*



## DESCRIPTION OF THE LEARNING TASK

This activity aims to explore *Quebec Society around 1905*. Students will be asked to interrogate archival evidence of an Anglophone woman of the Eastern Townships who lived from 1861 to 1942. Born to a wealthy Sherbrooke family, Minnie H. Bowen was an educated woman. As such, she became one of the first women to publish her writings in newspapers. At the time, women were rarely present in the public sphere. Minnie H. Bowen was very involved in various political and social spheres. She was a member of several associations, some of which fought for women's right to vote. Moreover, she was interested in Canadian politics and in the symbol that the Canadian flag represented.

### **The Teacher's Workbook and Documentary Record**

are tools that will allow the student to teach the social, cultural and political context related to this activity. This information will allow the teacher to guide students in their reflections. He or she is free to teach the elements of context in the way he or she wishes.

### **The Student's Workbook**

contains primary sources to be analyzed as well as questions that will guide students in their reflections.

/ Primary sources: all that was created at the time in which a given event took place. These sources were created by someone who lived during this period. For example, personal diaries, letters, photographs, interviews, newspapers, memoirs, etc. The archives housed at the Eastern Townships Resource Centre are primary sources.

**The teacher** guides students during this activity. He or she is the one who holds the keys to understanding the historical context.



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE ACTIVITY

As of the middle of the nineteenth century, major changes began taking place in Canada. Economically, this period was characterized by rapid industrialization. Urbanization changed living and working conditions. Different organizations aimed at fighting against abuse and inequality were created (unions, women's associations). Several demographic movements also took place (emigration to the United-States, to Western Canada, as well as immigration from the British Isles).

With the Canadian Confederation (1867), a federal Canadian regime began to take shape within the British Empire. Canada hoped to establish its place on the international stage and be acknowledged as a political entity. The creation of a Canadian flag was a good way to achieve this.

This period was also characterized by the first feminist movement. In England, suffragettes were fighting for the vote for women. In Canada, several groups were created at this time. Within the Anglophone community, several feminine organizations were created. In the Eastern Townships, Anglophone women gathered in associations of philanthropic, patriotic religious, or literary nature. In the following activities, we will work from the point of view of an Anglo-Protestant woman from Sherbrooke who had access to the public stage, which was very rare for women at the time.

## SPECIFIC, HISTORY-RELATED SKILLS

- / Analyzing visual documents
- / Interpreting visual documents

\*Verifiable information

\*Opinion: Personal point of view, often arbitrary and volatile



## PROCEDURES

## Activity 1

## Who Was Minnie H. Bowen?

/ Here are a few steps to follow to help you decode the documents (primary sources) with students. These are the different steps in the analysis of a historical document. This procedure is simplified in the Student's Workbook.

/ **Step 1:** Read (observe and identify important information):

// *Who? What? Where? When?*

/ **Step 2:** Interrogate the document:

External analysis (bearing on the context in which the document was produced)

// *With regards to the author (origins, intentions, religion, sex, etc.) and the source.*

Questions that must be answered:

// *Who is the author? Is the author an actor in the events that occurred, or merely a witness to them?*

// *To whom was this document destined? Why was it written?*

// *What are the origins of this document? Where does it come from? When was it produced?*

// *Is this document an original document or a translation?*

// *Does this document contain only an excerpt of the original document, or it is a reproduction of the original in its entirety?*

Internal analysis (bearing on the contents of the document)

Questions that must be answered:

// *What are the main themes discussed within this document? What is the main message?*

// *Is the content of the document plausible? Does it correspond to what we already know about this period and its context?*

// *Does the document offer facts or opinions?*

/ **Step 3:** Interpretation

Give meaning to the content of the text and to the themes that you have identified:

// *What do you think was the purpose of this document and of the message it contains? What questions does it answer? To what other documents is it related?*

As the students interpret the document, your role is to provide elements of context that will allow them to better understand who Minnie H. Bowen was. Use the Teacher's Documentary Record for help.

Here are a few elements that might come out of the students' analysis of the document:

/ Her first name and family name are Anglophone

/ There are several mentions of Sherbrooke and of St-John's. She seemed quite young on the photograph taken in Newfoundland. Maybe she moved.

/ She always seems well dressed (beautiful dresses) and well groomed.

/ The pictures were taken by a photographer. Her family paid to have their portraits taken.

/ She is a mother.

/ She is sitting in front of a house. Perhaps that is where she lived.

/ She is wearing a necklace and a broach on the photograph.

/ Her approximate age based on the dates.

Here are some guided reflections to be undertaken during the analysis:

/ Encourage the students to discuss her social status. She was an Anglophone woman who seemed to come from a wealthy family.

/ Lead the students to discuss the roles of men and women at that period, and talk about the fact that women were not allowed to vote.

/ Bring the students to talk about the fact that this woman wrote for a newspaper. She needed to be educated to be able to write. Moreover, in this period women did not usually express their opinions in public.

/ Lead students to discuss this woman's vision of Canada as expressed in her poetry:

// *Canada is the daughter of England*

// *Justice and honour are important*

// *The flag is important for the nation*

## Activity 2

### Minnie H. Bowen and the Canadian Flag

The Teacher's Document Record includes a text entitled "Minnie H. Bowen: A Woman in Search of a Canadian Symbol". The article that the students must read comes from this text. You can use it to provide the students with some elements of context. The image contained in the article is a hand-made flag made by Minnie H. Bowen herself. The Eastern Townships Resource Centre owns this flag.

**Here are a few questions that will help you guide the students in the analysis of Minnie H. Bowen's flag:**

- / Which flag does Minnie H. Bowen's flag resemble?
- / Why does Minnie H. Bowen refer to the British flag?
- / Which cultural groups are included in Minnie H. Bowen's flag?
- / Are there groups missing on this flag? Are there people missing?
- / What does the white cross represent?
- / What are some qualities that she believes characterize the Canadian people and that are represented by this flag?
- / Do you think there are any important elements missing in this flag? If so, what are they?

## Activity 3

### Analyzing Primary Sources

It is now your turn to draw your own Canadian flag. You must use the symbols (image, colour, shapes) that represent, in your opinion, nineteenth-century Canada.

1. Include at least two cultural elements (associated with a group in particular or with the population as a whole)
2. Letter Discussing a Loyalist
3. John Savage's Petitione

In order to be able to accomplish this task, the teacher must have covered certain elements pertaining to the social realities of the period of under study (Quebec society around 1905). Use the Documentary Record for guidance.





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