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Canada's Public Healthcare System Medicare: Past, Present, and Future



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CANADA'S PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Medicare: Past, Present, and Future

Medicare—our publicly funded, universal healthcare system—has become one of the most recognized markers of Canadian identity. Canadians believe that the provision of healthcare to all citizens is one of our most important priorities. This belief was tangibly shown in 2004, when Tommy Douglas—the man considered to be the founder of Medicare—was voted Canada's most important citizen during CBC's *Greatest Canadian Contest*.

Medicare is constantly evolving as it responds to changing societal pressures, like increased demands for services, shifting ideological and political agendas, and changing technologies, to name a few. Because of this constant evolution, maintaining the current healthcare system is expensive and challenging, and as a result the system is not without its detractors. This resource will help Grade 9 social studies students explore the history, principles and challenges to healthcare in Canada, and compare and contrast our system to those in the United States and other countries. Ultimately, this guide will help teachers better prepare their students to participate in creating a future that ensures that all Canadians have access to high level public healthcare.

Medicare was established by the passage of the Canada Health Act in 1967 (Alberta joined in 1969). It was and still is based on the principle that all Canadians should have access to basic publicly funded healthcare. For Canadians, universal healthcare as a social program reflects our belief in promoting the health and well being of all citizens, regardless of their ability to pay.

The benefits and deficiencies of Medicare are the subject of ongoing national and provincial debates. Generally, these debates hinge on the tension between maintaining a strong public healthcare system and pressure to give more responsibility for healthcare to the individual. This resource provides teachers the opportunity to engage Grade 9 social studies students in some of these debates.

Canada's Healthcare System—Medicare Past, Present, and Future asks students to consider the Essential Question: To what extent should Canadians continue to support and sustain a public healthcare system? Each lesson addresses the Essential Question by focusing on a more specific question, called a Key Question.

This resource provides information, activities, and supplementary resources for learning about the principles of Medicare and addressing the complex issues that continuously challenge its existence. The resource is written to the outcome specifications of the Alberta Program of Social Studies (2007) for Grade 9—Canada: Opportunities and Challenges. Specific curriculum outcomes are provided at the beginning of each lesson.

Rationale

Overview



CANADA'S PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Medicare: Past, Present, and Future

Overview **Lesson 1: Healthcare Issues and Quality of Life**

Key Question—What is the relationship of health and well being to high quality of life?

This lesson focuses on the main concept of this resource—healthcare. Students will explore quality of life indicators related to health. The inquiry lesson will result in student-generated questions that can be used throughout the unit to guide teaching.

Lesson 2: Healthcare—Who Should Be Responsible?

Key Question—Who should be responsible to pay for healthcare: the individual or society?

This lesson encourages students to think about the fundamental principles related to private versus publicly funded healthcare. It makes analogies to a racecar and a bus respectively, using guided visualization and inquiry. The goal of the lesson is to help students consider the key question. This lesson can also serve as a closing activity and a unit review.

Lesson 3: What is Medicare?

Key Question—How do the foundational principles of Medicare reflect Canadians' belief in the value of public healthcare?

This lesson highlights the five key principles upon which Medicare is based. These principles are: public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and accessibility. Students will think about challenges and issues associated with the implementation of each principle. These same five principles can be used to analyze other countries' systems.

Lesson 4: Life Before Medicare

Key Question—How have the forces of history shaped the way we respond to health issues today?

This lesson provides the historical context for the evolution of Medicare. The activity focuses on true stories from the pre-Medicare era. Students are encouraged to tell stories from their own families.

Lesson 5: Tommy Douglas, the Founder of Medicare

Key Questions—How important was Tommy Douglas in the adoption of public healthcare in Canada? To what extent can an individual influence public policy?

This activity focuses on the key events that led to the creation of Medicare in Canada and highlights the life of Tommy Douglas, the man who “made it happen.” After exploring his life and times, students will develop a historic timeline that highlights major events in the development of public healthcare.



CANADA'S PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Medicare: Past, Present, and Future

Lesson 6: Challenges to Medicare

Key Question—What challenges does Canada's public healthcare system face and how can we respond to these challenges?

This lesson identifies several key challenges to Canada's healthcare system. It asks students to explore these challenges and make recommendations on how to address these issues effectively.

Lesson 7: Comparing Canadian Healthcare to the United States and Other Countries

Key Question—How has the United States of America responded to pressure to introduce publicly supported healthcare initiatives?

While Canada has adopted a public system, the USA has traditionally left healthcare services in the private sector. This lesson asks students to examine the American healthcare system, where there is an ongoing debate about introducing aspects of public care and providing coverage for the uninsured. A major platform of the Obama administration was to extend public healthcare in the USA. This lesson asks students to explore the American healthcare experience. Options for analysing and researching other countries are provided.

Lesson 8: Healthcare: Values, Rights and Policies

Key Question—What economic and social values shape healthcare policies of various political parties?

This lesson asks students to consider the economic and social values espoused by various political parties and consider the ways these values affect their healthcare platforms and policies. Specific reference to healthcare policy will be made within the context of social policy in general.

Lesson 9: My Vision of the Future of Healthcare

Key Question—What is my vision for healthcare for Canadians in the future and how can I work toward achieving my vision?

This lesson asks students to envision their preferred future for Canada's healthcare system—a part of the social infrastructure that addresses quality of life. In addition to developing a vision, students are encouraged to suggest and undertake actions designed to achieve their personal vision.



Medicare: Past, Present, and Future

Using this Resource

This resource can be utilized as an entire unit, or you can select individual lessons to supplement the course textbook: Lychak, *Issues for Canadians* (2008). The philosophy of this resource is that students learn best when engaged in active inquiry, exploring multiple perspectives, constructing their own meanings by interacting with others, and given opportunities to talk and think about key issues. The resource is designed to encourage students to become active, engaged and responsible citizens who value quality healthcare for all Canadians. Students will have opportunities to demonstrate their learning in a variety of forms, such as posters, presentations, role playing, and writing newspaper articles and position papers. Both formative and summative assessment ideas are provided for most lessons.

Lesson Format

Each lesson follows the lesson format outlined here:

Lesson Title – the main topic of the lesson.

Key Question – students are encouraged to reflect on a key question related to the lesson topic. Collectively, these will inform students about the Essential Question — To what extent should Canadians continue to support and sustain a public healthcare system?

Purpose – the intent of the lesson.

Learning Outcomes – the learning outcomes from the Alberta Grade 9 Social Studies curriculum. Supporting outcomes are also provided (*italicized*).

Duration – number of periods (45 to 50 minutes).

Materials – additional learning resources and supplies needed to carry out the lesson.

Opener – short 5 to 10 minute activity designed to stimulate interest and provide a focus at the beginning of each major Learning Activity.

Main Learning Activity – the main learning strategy.

Closure – a concluding idea or activity. Usually requires revisiting the Key Question for the lesson.

Assessment – ideas for formative and summative assessment and supporting rubrics. Rubrics are shown on Student Learning Guides provided in each lesson.

Student Learning Guides – blackline masters designed to be used by students for activities and assignments.

Backgrounders – provides detailed background information for the teacher that can also be used with discretion with students.

Support Materials – useful websites and media information.

