

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

# TREASURED BELONGINGS

THE HAHN FAMILY & THE SEARCH FOR A STOLEN LEGACY



ONLINE EXHIBITION TOUR  
TEACHER & STUDENT ACTIVITY GUIDE

*Treasured Belongings: The Hahn Family & the Search for a Stolen Legacy*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

EXHIBITION INTRODUCTION	02
-------------------------	----

---

ACTIVITY GUIDE OVERVIEW	03
-------------------------	----

---

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 1

VIDEO TIME CODE 16:45

### *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany*

---

OVERVIEW	04
----------	----

---

OBJECTIVES	04
------------	----

---

INSTRUCTIONS	05
--------------	----

---

STUDY DOCUMENTS	06
-----------------	----

---

EXTENSION ACTIVITY	08
--------------------	----

---

EXTENSION STUDY DOCUMENTS	09
---------------------------	----

---

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 2

VIDEO TIME CODE 28:38

### *The Search for Justice in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*

---

OVERVIEW	13
----------	----

---

OBJECTIVES	13
------------	----

---

INSTRUCTIONS	14
--------------	----

---

STUDY DOCUMENTS	15
-----------------	----

---

EXTENSION ACTIVITY	18
--------------------	----

---

EXTENSION STUDY DOCUMENTS	19
---------------------------	----

---

APPENDICES	TIMELINE	24
------------	----------	----

---

GLOSSARY	25
----------	----

---

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES	26
-----------------------	----

---

# EXHIBITION INTRODUCTION

*Treasured Belongings: The Hahn Family & the Search for a Stolen Legacy* tells the story of a German-Jewish family, the Hahns of Göttingen—owners of one of the most significant collections of silver Judaica in pre-war Europe. The exhibition follows the Hahn family as they navigate escalating Nazi persecution leading to their separation and displacement, the loss of their property and businesses, the confiscation of their beloved possessions, and the murder of family members Max and Gertrud Hahn.

A story rooted in the past, *Treasured Belongings* embodies a contemporary struggle for justice. With increasing international co-operation and public support for the restitution of Holocaust-era assets, the quest for the Hahns' stolen collection continues through the initiative of a grandson of Max Hahn, Vancouver's Dr. Michael Hayden

Speaking to themes of cultural loss, reconciliation and intergenerational legacy, this exhibition brings together a selection of original artefacts and documents belonging to the Hahn family, as well as audio-visual interviews and digital resources to provide diverse entry points for students.

# ACTIVITY GUIDE OVERVIEW

- This educational resource facilitates student engagement with historical context for the VHEC's original exhibition *Treasured Belongings: The Hahn Family & the Search for a Stolen Legacy*.
- The guide is designed to accompany a 30-minute video-recorded exhibition tour with curator Dr. Ilona Shulman Spaar located here: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/502529730](https://vimeo.com/502529730)
- Activities are recommended for **students of grades six to 12**.
- This resource presents **two student activities** with optional extensions.
- Each activity provides teaching materials for 45–60 minutes in total. If you are time-restricted, **the duration can be adapted** by selecting one rather than two activities, or by selecting from the discussion questions and/or study documents provided.
- Activities are comprised of **discussion questions, student study documents, primary source documents and photographs**.
- This guide also includes a timeline, glossary and list of recommended resources.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE WITH THE ONLINE EXHIBITION TOUR

While watching the video, a small icon will appear in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. The icon indicates when to pause the video and complete a related student activity.



### **STUDENT ACTIVITY 1** ICON APPEARS AT TIME CODE 16:45

#### *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany*

This activity introduces students to the escalating antisemitic laws instated by the Nazi Party and the legal theft of Jewish property authorized by the government. Through two case studies, students identify the effects of antisemitic regulations on individual families.

### **STUDENT ACTIVITY 2** ICON APPEARS AT TIME CODE 28:38

#### *The Search for Justice in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*

This activity gives students the opportunity to learn about Germany's post-war efforts to reconcile with their difficult past through the process of restitution. The extension activity offers links to Canada's own history of injustices through a student-driven examination of formal apologies made by the Canadian federal government.

Both activities relate to the subject matter covered in the tour.

You can pause the video when the icon appears and facilitate the activities with your students. Alternatively, you can watch the entire video and return to the activities with your students afterwards.

The activity plan objectives in this guide are **in alignment with core competencies of the BC curriculum**, including:

#### ✓ **COMMUNICATION**

Fostered by acquiring, interpreting and presenting information through group activities and discussion.

#### ✓ **CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING**

Fostered by analysis of primary sources and group discussion.

#### ✓ **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Fostered by reflection on social responsibility as well as personal and social values by learning about bystanders, resistance and rescue during the Holocaust.

# STUDENT ACTIVITY 1

PAUSE VIDEO AT 16:45



## *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany*

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**DURATION: 45-60 MINUTES** The length of the activity can be adapted by selecting one case study for analysis rather than two, or by selecting from the discussion questions provided.

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## OVERVIEW

Students will gain a critical understanding of the increasing discriminatory measures and the systematic persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany that led up to the genocide of European Jews. From 1933 until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the Nazis implemented more than 400 decrees and regulations that restricted all aspects of Jewish life. By considering the experiences of two Jewish families, students will learn how Nazi policy directly affected individuals.

This activity deepens students' understanding of historic events in the context of the Holocaust, enhances their observational and interpretative skills and fosters critical thinking.

## OBJECTIVES

Through analyses and discussion students will:

- **Use Primary Source Evidence:** Students uncover evidence by examining reproductions of historical photographs and documents, make reasoned inferences and construct meaning through the corroboration of primary and secondary sources.
- **Identify Continuity and Change:** Students analyze anti-Jewish laws and discuss their impact on Jews in Nazi Germany.
- **Analyze Cause and Consequence:** Students participate in activities and discussions which help them to understand the political and economic conditions within Germany that allowed for the escalation of antisemitic regulations, and the consequences of these policies.
- **Consider Historical Perspectives:** Students consider the perspective of German Jews before the Second World War, and how individuals responded to persecution.

# INSTRUCTIONS

## 1 | STUDY DOCUMENTS

Individually, or in groups, students are asked to read the following study documents. Documents can be printed and distributed to students.

1.	READING	<i>Nazi Theft: The Legal Robbery of Jewish Belongings</i>
2.	READING	<i>The Hahn Family: Successful Business Leaders</i>

## 2 | CLASS OR GROUP DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, you may discuss, but are not limited to, the following questions. If you choose to discuss in small groups, come together as a class after your conversations to share your thoughts and conclusions.

- What do these study documents tell us about the rise of Nazism and antisemitism in Germany?
- What was the social, economic and political context of the time?
- How were German-Jewish businesses affected by the Nazis' election to power?
- How did antisemitic laws and measures contribute to isolating German Jews?
- How did the Nazi seizure of Jewish property influence communities, both Jewish and non-Jewish?
- Who benefitted from the theft of Jewish property?
  - o What does this reveal about the complicity of various levels of society?
- What do these study documents tell us about how individuals were affected?
  - o Is there something specific that stood out to you?
- What does it mean to have your citizenship revoked?
  - o What impact might it have on your civic rights?
  - o What impact might it have on your identity?
- What factors made it difficult for German Jews to emigrate?

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 1** *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany*
**1. READING:** *Nazi Theft: The Legal Robbery of Jewish Belongings*

The systematic persecution and murder of six million Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators was accompanied by a lesser known aspect of the Holocaust: the calculated theft of Jewish assets.

During the Nazis' rise to power in the early 1930s, Germany experienced economic and social hardship. The Nazis drew on existing antisemitism—the hatred of Jews—and blamed Jews for the country's problems following Germany's defeat in the First World War. Between 1933 and 1939, the Nazi Party instated more than 400 antisemitic laws that stripped German Jews of their citizenship and excluded them from German public life. Within their first year in power, the Nazis ordered a boycott of all Jewish businesses.

More antisemitic restrictions soon followed: Jewish doctors, lawyers and civil servants were no longer permitted to practice their professions, Jews were required to register themselves and their property with the Nazi government and Jewish business owners were later forced to sell off or hand over their businesses to non-Jewish citizens through the process of "Aryanization," the forced expulsion of Jews from business life in Nazi Germany. While the theft was ordered by the state, many ordinary German citizens willingly participated and benefitted from the looting of Jewish property.

The discriminatory laws left many German Jews without the means of supporting themselves, without homes and with little connection to their former lives. For many Jewish families, the struggle to save their possessions took place alongside a desperate search for refuge.

Although Jewish emigration from Germany was encouraged before the Second World War, high taxes and other regulations imposed by the Nazi government made it difficult for Jews to leave. Many were reluctant to leave older relatives behind and hoped, instead, that the threat posed by Nazism would pass as antisemitic movements had done in previous generations.



A woman reads a boycott sign posted in the window of a Jewish-owned department store in Berlin, Germany on April 1, 1933. —United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park.

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 1** *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany*

## 2. READING: *The Hahn Family: Successful Business Leaders*

The Hahns were a German-Jewish family who had lived in Göttingen, Germany since 1919. Max and Gertrud Hahn were devoted parents to their two children, Rudolf and Hanni. The Hahns practiced Jewish faith and observed cultural traditions. With family roots in Germany dating back several hundred years, they proudly participated in the responsibilities of German citizenship. The family contributed significantly to their country's economy, owning factories and employing hundreds of non-Jewish workers.

With his brother Nathan, Max built his father's business trading in rawhides, pelts and sheepskins into one of the town's most successful enterprises. The brothers expanded the family business to include a shoe factory under the trademark Gallus.

The Nazis' rise to power meant increasing antisemitic regulations for the Hahns and their businesses. The family's life was overturned by Kristallnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass"), a state-approved riot on November 9–10, 1938, during which Max was arrested and then imprisoned for more than eight months.

During his imprisonment, Max was forced to surrender his family's businesses, including the Gallus shoe factory. As part of the process, the Hahns were required to sell the Gallus trademark to a non-Jewish shoe manufacturer whose business flourished in the post-war era and who benefitted from the brand's reputation for producing high-quality men's shoes. The Gallus trademark still exists today and is owned by Deichmann, Europe's largest shoe retailer.



Left: The building which housed the Gallus shoe factory prior to 1939. After the liquidation of the Gallus shoe factory, the Nazis used this property as a depot for books confiscated from German, Dutch and French Jews. —Courtesy of the Hahn family.

Right: These shoes, manufactured by the Gallus shoe factory, were discovered by Claus Jahnke, a Vancouver-based fashion historian and collector. Jahnke found these shoes at the Salvation Army thrift shop in New Westminster, BC, in the 1990s. Recognizing their historical significance and quality craftsmanship, Jahnke added the shoes to his collection. —Courtesy of Claus Jahnke Collection.

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY

## 1 | STUDY DOCUMENTS

Students are asked to read and analyze the following:

1.	<b>READING</b>	<i>The Meyers: Owners of a Leading Lace Company in Germany</i>
2.	<b>PHOTOGRAPHS</b>	<i>Before 1938: Meyer family business building</i> <i>After 1954: Building formerly occupied by the Meyer family business</i>

**PHOTOGRAPH ANALYSIS:** Students are asked to examine the photographs and answer the questions listed on the photo analysis worksheet as best as they can.

3.	<b>WORKSHEET</b>	<i>Analyzing Photographs</i>
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## 2 | CLASS OR GROUP DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, you may discuss, but are not limited to, the following questions. You may also decide to re-visit discussion questions from the previous activity. If you choose to discuss in small groups, come together as a class after your conversations to share your thoughts and conclusions.

- What do these images reveal about the state of pre-war and post-war Germany?
- What questions do these photographs raise?
- What is the importance of using primary sources, such as photographs?
- What do these images tell us about the experience of the Meyer family?
- Why is it important to keep historical artefacts such as the retrieved lace from the Meyer family business in an archive or museum?

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 1** *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany***EXTENSION ACTIVITY****1. READING:** *The Meyers: Owners of a Leading Lace Company in Germany*

Brothers Paul and Max Meyer were born in Cologne, Germany to their parents Eugen and Alice. Their father ran the family's fashion business, called M. Meyer & Company, founded in the 1870s. At its height, the business was the leading lace company in Germany, providing exclusive patterns to manufacturers and employing more than 300 workers—most of whom were not Jewish. With the Nazis' rise to power, the company faced restrictive antisemitic regulations. Jewish designers and manufacturers were portrayed by the Nazis as contaminants of the German fashion industry. Although the company was forced to downsize, the lace business was still flourishing.

By 1937, the Nuremberg Race Laws were in effect. The Meyer siblings and other Jewish children were forbidden from attending public schools and were prohibited from most parks, cafes, movie theatres and other public spaces.

On *Kristallnacht*, the "Night of Broken Glass," on November 9-10, 1938, large scale violence erupted against Jews in Germany and Austria. Thousands of Jewish businesses and houses were destroyed, and 30,000 Jewish men were arrested. Among them was Paul, who was arrested and sent to Dachau, the first of the Nazi concentration camps. With the help of his brother, Paul was released a month later, on the condition that he emigrate from Germany.

Before the Meyer family was able to obtain passports and a transit visa, they were forced to sell their business and pay exorbitantly high taxes. Jews were forbidden to leave Germany with any assets beyond a suitcase of clothes. Consequently, the remainder of the family's former wealth was seized. The brothers travelled with their parents through Belgium and the United States, before eventually settling in Vancouver, Canada.



Top: Lace garment produced by M. Meyer & Company in 1935. —Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, Meyer family fonds. Bottom: Paul Meyer's passport stamped with a "J" for Jude (Jew). —Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, Meyer family fonds.

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 1** *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany*EXTENSION ACTIVITY**2. PHOTOGRAPHS**

*Building formerly occupied by the Meyer family business*

*Before 1938*



*After 1954*



In 1954, Paul Meyer returned to Cologne and visited the former location of his family's lace business. The original building was damaged, but the basement remained intact. Paul retrieved samples and other materials produced by M. Meyer & Company from the basement and brought these materials back to Vancouver.

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE RETRIEVED LACE SAMPLES ►](#)

—Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, Meyer family fonds.

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 1** *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany*EXTENSION ACTIVITY**3. PHOTOGRAPH ANALYSIS WORKSHEET**

1. Describe in a few words what you see on the photo of the Meyer family business *before 1938*.

What do you see?

What is your impression of the building?

Does the building say something about the owners and if so, what?

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 1** *Legal Robbery: The Theft of Jewish Belongings in Nazi Germany*

Are there any special details that stand out to you?

**2. Compare the Meyer family business building *before 1938* and *after 1954*.**

What are the main differences? Please list your observations.

# STUDENT ACTIVITY 2

PAUSE VIDEO AT 28:38



## *The Search for Justice in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*

**DURATION: 45-90 MINUTES** The length of the activity can be adapted by selecting one of the two reading documents or by selecting the extension activity.

## OVERVIEW

Students will learn about the complexity of attempts to achieve justice following the Holocaust as well as Germany's post-war efforts to reconcile with their difficult past through the process of restitution. In the extension activity, students explore Canada's own history of injustices through an inquiry-based examination of events that have warranted formal apologies from the Canadian federal government.

## OBJECTIVES

Through research and discussion, students are encouraged to critically think about the following themes:

- **Restitution**
- **Reconciliation**
- **Persecution**
- **Current Racism and Antisemitism**
- **Remembrance and Commemoration**
- **National Identity**

Through research and discussion, students are encouraged to critically think about the following themes:

- **Establish Historical Significance:** Students establish the historical significance of events in relation to a nation's past and present national identity.
- **Identify Continuity and Change:** Students reflect on continuity and change as it applies to targeted groups today.
- **Analyze Cause and Consequence:** Students identify the conditions under which the events took place and understand how consequences can be long lasting by determining the present situations of the affected groups.
- **Understand the Ethical Dimension of History:** Students make reasoned ethical judgements on the responsibility and commitment of current governments and citizens to redress historical wrongs.

# INSTRUCTIONS

## 1 | STUDY DOCUMENTS

Individually or in groups, students are asked to read the following study documents. You can print the study documents and distribute to students.

1.	READING	<i>Germany’s Responsibility: Attempting Justice and Reconciliation after the Holocaust</i>
2.	READING	<i>Reuters article: “Merkel expresses ‘shame’ during Auschwitz visit, vows to fight anti-Semitism”</i>

## 2 | CLASS OR GROUP DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, you may discuss, but are not limited to, the following questions. If you choose to discuss in small groups, come together as a class after your conversations to share your thoughts and conclusions.

- Is it possible to achieve justice after the Holocaust?
- What is the responsibility of current governments for redressing historical wrongs?
- In which ways has the German government reconciled their past?
- Have they been successful?
- Is it possible to assign a monetary value to the suffering of another person?
  - > What is achieved through financial compensation?
  - > What cannot be accomplished through financial compensation?
- In your opinion, has Germany done enough to redress historical wrongs?
- Can learning about the Holocaust help fight current antisemitism and racism?
- Whose responsibility is it to remember and respond to the Holocaust?

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 2** *The Search for Justice in the Aftermath of the Holocaust***1. READING:** *Germany's Responsibility: Attempting Justice and Reconciliation after the Holocaust*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Germany was divided between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union in the east. Both West Germany and East Germany struggled to come to terms with the country's Nazi past and processes of restitution and reconciliation varied greatly between the newly formed states.

In East Germany, the Soviets refused to accept accountability for Nazi crimes and instead placed blame on Western capitalism. In West Germany, the government assumed responsibility for returning stolen property and financially compensating victims of Nazi crimes. However, the country struggled with the process of denazification, with many Nazi officials remaining in positions of power. Ordinary Germans grappled with questions of responsibility for the crimes committed by their nation and, for many, recognition of their own complicity or inaction proved challenging. The majority of Nazi perpetrators were never tried for their crimes.

Since its reunion in 1990, Germany has recognized its unique responsibility to ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten. Germany aims to reconcile with its past through the compensation of victims, education of German citizens and memorialization of the Holocaust. As of today, the German government has paid more than \$80 billion in reparations and continues to provide social welfare services and financial assistance to around 132,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors. However, as many as 50,000 victims have never been compensated.

The German government dedicated January 27, the day of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp, as an official day of remembrance, a date that is now internationally recognized. Former concentration camps have been preserved as museums and education centres, and memorials can be found throughout the country, most notably, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe which stands at the centre of Berlin, the capital city of Germany.



Holocaust memorial in Berlin by Peter Eisenman.

**2. READING:** *Reuters article: “Merkel expresses ‘shame’ during Auschwitz visit, vows to fight anti-Semitism”* BY WOJCIECH ZURAWSKI, ANDREAS RINKE.

OSWIECIM, Poland (Reuters) - Angela Merkel expressed “deep shame” on Friday during her first visit as chancellor to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Holocaust memorial and vowed to fight rising racism and anti-Semitism in Germany and Europe.

Dressed in black, Merkel said the crimes committed at the site in southern Poland where the Nazis ran their largest death camp would always be part of German history.

“This site obliges us to keep the memory alive. We must remember the crimes that were committed here and name them clearly,” Merkel said during a ceremony attended by Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

“I feel deep shame given the barbaric crimes that were committed here by Germans,” she added. Merkel brought a 60-million-euro (\$66.13 million) donation from Germany’s federal government and its 16 states to help conserve the site where 1.1 million people were killed, most of them Jews.

Before her speech, Merkel and Morawiecki toured the camp’s crematorium where victims’ bodies were burned. They walked through the camp’s iron gate bearing the motto “Arbeit macht frei” (Work sets you free) and visited the barracks.

Merkel has regularly acknowledged German responsibility for atrocities in World War Two. Her visit ensured she followed in the footsteps of two former chancellors by seeing the site while in office. “Today we are experiencing a worrying racism, rising intolerance, and a wave of hate crime,” Merkel said in her speech. “We are experiencing an attack on the fundamental values of democracy and a dangerous revisionism of history which is used for the purpose of hostility against certain groups.”

Leaders of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party have been accused of trying to play down Nazi crimes and suggesting that history must be re-written to focus on German victims.

“We are particularly turning our attention to anti-Semitism, which threatens Jewish life in Germany, the European Union and beyond,” Merkel said.




“Auschwitz was a German extermination camp, operated by Germans. It is important for me to stress this fact. It is important to clearly name the culprits: it is us Germans and we owe this to the victims and to ourselves,” she added. Germany is the largest donor to the foundation which funds conservation efforts at the site.

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 2** *The Search for Justice in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*

The Polish government is one of the largest financial supporters of the Auschwitz museum as a whole—it funded more than 20% of its budget in 2018.

More than 3 million of Poland's 3.2 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust, roughly around half of all the Jews murdered during World War Two.

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WORLD NEWS
DECEMBER 6, 2019 / 3:32 AM / 4 MONTHS AGO

## Merkel expresses 'shame' during Auschwitz visit, vows to fight anti-Semitism

Wojciech Zurawski, Andreas Rinke 3 MIN READ

OSWIECIM, Poland (Reuters) - Angela Merkel expressed “deep shame” on Friday during her first visit as chancellor to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Holocaust memorial and vowed to fight rising racism and anti-Semitism in Germany and Europe.



Angela Merkel visits the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial

00:46 / 02:03

Dressed in black, Merkel said the crimes committed at the site in southern Poland where the Nazis ran their largest death camp would always be part of German history.

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY

## 1 | STUDY DOCUMENTS

Students are asked to look at and read the following study documents:

1.	<b>READING</b>	<i>National Post article: “A Timeline of Official Apologies from the Federal Government”</i>
2.	<b>OPTIONAL READING</b>	<i>Globe &amp; Mail article: “Trudeau warns against modern anti-Semitism in apology for turning away Jewish refugees fleeing Nazis”</i>

## 2 | GROUP ASSIGNMENT

Students may use the following questions to guide their inquiry:

- What happened? What was the historical context of the event?
- Which laws and/or policies allowed for the injustice to take place?
- Have the laws changed? When? How?
- How did the targeted group react to the government’s apology?
- Was compensation offered?
- Is the targeted group still experiencing the effects of past injustices or continued prejudice?
- Were you familiar with this historical event? If not, what is the significance of you not knowing about the event?

## 3 | CLASS OR GROUP DISCUSSION

As a class or in small groups, you may discuss, but are not limited to, the following questions. If you choose to discuss in small groups, come together as a class after your conversations to share your thoughts and conclusions.

- What purposes do apologies serve? What are the qualities of a good apology?
- How can an apology help the process of reconciliation? Is an apology enough? What else needs to happen?
- Whose stories are told and whose stories are missing in the narratives of Canadian history?
- How important is it for citizens to know the truth about their country’s past? Why?
- Why might some people oppose uncovering past injustices?
- Has learning about these events challenged your view on Canada’s past, or its present image as a multicultural country?
- What events might be happening today that future governments may feel the need to apologize for?

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY****1. READING:** *National Post article: “A Timeline of Official Apologies from the Federal Government”*

OTTAWA — When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Thursday exonerated Chief Poundmaker in Saskatchewan, it was the latest in a long list of government efforts to apologize for past wrongs. Here are a few formal and informal apologies:

**1988**

Sept. 22: Prime minister Brian Mulroney formally apologizes in the House of Commons for the internment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War.

**1990**

Nov. 4: Mulroney offers an apology to Italian-Canadians declared “enemy aliens” when Italy declared war on Canada in 1940 and detained during the Second World War.

**2001**

Dec. 11: Ron Duhamel, the minister of veterans affairs, apologizes in the House of Commons for the executions of 23 Canadian soldiers during the First World War and says their names will be added to the country’s book of remembrance.

**2006**

June 22: Then-prime minister Stephen Harper apologizes in the House of Commons for the head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants between 1885 and 1923.

**2008**

May 9: The federal government announces a \$10-million education grant to recognize the internment of Ukrainian-Canadians during the First World War, but stops short of an official apology.

June 11: Harper apologizes in the House of Commons for Canada’s residential-schools system, which more than 150,000 First Nations, Metis and Inuit children attended from the 1840s to 1996.

Aug. 3: At an event in B.C., Harper apologizes for the Komagata Maru incident, in which a shipload of migrants from India was turned away from Vancouver in 1914, but organizers immediately demand an official apology in the House of Commons.

**2016**

May 18: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologizes in the House of Commons for the Komagata Maru incident.

**2017**

Nov. 24: Trudeau apologizes in Goose Bay, N.L., for abuse and cultural losses at residential schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, saying the gesture is part of recognizing “hard truths” Canada must confront as a society.

Nov. 28: Trudeau apologizes in the House of Commons for past state-sanctioned discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirited people in Canada that he said cost people their “livelihoods and in some cases, their lives.”

**2018**

Nov. 2: Trudeau apologizes and exonerates six Tsilhqot’in chiefs invited by colonial officials for peace talks more than 150 years ago only to be arrested, tried and hanged, saying the incident was a “betrayal of trust” and “an injustice.”

Nov. 7: Trudeau apologizes in the House of Commons for Canada’s decision in 1939 to reject an asylum request from more than 900 German Jews, 254 of whom died in the Holocaust — a fate Trudeau says could have been avoided.

**2019**

March 8: Trudeau apologizes in Iqaluit for the way Inuit in northern Canada were treated for tuberculosis in the mid-20th century, calling the policies colonial and misguided.

May 23: Trudeau exonerates Chief Poundmaker in the community that bears his name — the Poundmaker Cree Nation — and apologizes for the chief’s unjust conviction for treason more than 130 years ago.

STUDENT ACTIVITY 2 *The Search for Justice in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*[LINK TO NATIONAL POST](#) ▼

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## A timeline of official apologies from the federal government



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau formally apologizes for a 1914 government decision that barred most of the passengers of the Komagata Maru from entering Canada, in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on May 18, 2016. *Adrian Wajsf*  
/ THE CANADIAN PRESS

**OTTAWA —** When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Thursday exonerated Chief Poundmaker in Saskatchewan, it was the latest in a long list of government efforts to apologize for past wrongs. Here are a few formal and informal apologies:

**1988**

Sept. 22: Prime minister Brian Mulroney formally apologizes in the House of Commons for the internment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War.

**1990**

EXTENSION ACTIVITY**2. READING:** *Globe and Mail article: “Trudeau warns against modern anti-Semitism in apology for turning away Jewish refugees fleeing Nazis”* BY STEVEN CHASE

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau formally apologized Wednesday for a shameful episode in Canada’s history, when this country turned away more than 900 German Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi terror and persecution.

Canada’s 1939 refusal to grant asylum to the refugees on the MS St. Louis ocean liner and its callous attitude to what was unfolding in Europe was not only a dereliction of moral duty but helped embolden Adolf Hitler as he set about murdering millions of Jewish people, Mr. Trudeau said.

“[Hitler] watched ... as we refused their visas, ignored their letters and denied them entry,” the Prime Minister told the House of Commons.

“There is little doubt that our silence permitted the Nazis to come up with their own final solution,” he said of the indifference and apathy shown by many countries toward the Jewish people at the time.

In May, 1939, the St. Louis left Germany with passengers, including more than 900 Jewish German citizens seeking sanctuary. These refugees were barred from disembarking at the ship’s first destination in Cuba and then denied entry into the United States and finally Canada because of the government’s discriminatory “none is too many” immigration policy toward Jewish people, the Prime Minister’s Office said in a summary of the events. The U.S. State Department made its own apology in 2012.

The Jewish passengers returned to Europe where many were later condemned to concentration camps, with 254 killed during the Holocaust.

“To harbour such hatred and indifference towards the refugees was to share in the moral responsibility for their deaths,” Mr. Trudeau said. “We apologize to the 907 German Jews aboard the MS St. Louis, as well as their families,” the Prime Minister told the Commons. “We also apologize to others who paid the price of our inaction – whom we doomed to the ultimate horror of the death camps.”

Jan Blumenstein, a survivor of Nazi concentration camps including Auschwitz, had a grandmother on the St. Louis—Regina Blumenstein—who ultimately died in the Holocaust. He was present for the apology. “Finally, somebody came to their senses and realized this is [still] going on all the time,” he said of the speech, saying it was important in that it acknowledged anti-Semitism remains strong.

Canada’s refusal to accept the St. Louis passengers took place more than six months after the infamous Kristallnacht in November, 1938, when storm troopers and members of the Hitler Youth burned hundreds of synagogues, smashed

**STUDENT ACTIVITY 2** *The Search for Justice in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*

thousands of shop windows and killed dozens of Jews. About 30,000 people were sent to concentration camps, the first large cohort of the millions who would be murdered.

Mr. Trudeau warned of an “alarming rate” of discrimination and violence against Jewish people today.

“According to the most recent figures, 17 per cent of all hate crimes in Canada target Jewish people – far higher per capita than any other group,” the Prime Minister said.

“Holocaust deniers still exist. Anti-Semitism is still far too present. Jewish institutions and neighbourhoods are still being vandalized with swastikas,” he said.

He cited the recent killing of 11 people and wounding of six others at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. “We must guard our communities and institutions against the kinds of evils that took hold in the hearts of so many, more than 70 years ago, for they did not end with the war,” Mr. Trudeau said.

The Prime Minister also raised intimidation of Jewish students on some Canadian college and university campuses by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions [BDS] campaign against Israel that he said makes them feel “unwelcomed and uncomfortable.”

The Prime Minister said the “long overdue” apology to the passengers of the St. Louis cannot erase the pain suffered by these refugees or those murdered in the Holocaust or their descendants. He said, however, he hopes it helps those hearing the apology to heal.

“More than 70 years ago, Canada turned its back on you,” he said to Jewish people. “But today, Canadians pledge, now and forever: never again.”

Andrew Scheer, the Conservative Leader of the Official Opposition, echoed this apology and warned of “a disturbing resurgence and even normalization of anti-Semitic rhetoric.” This hatred “was not eradicated with the defeat of the Nazis. It is, unfortunately and sadly, very much alive today,” he said.

Nimrod Barkan, Israel’s Ambassador to Canada, was on hand for Mr. Trudeau’s address and said he was grateful to the Prime Minister. “We are all encouraged not only by the apology but more so by the comments about the need to fight anti-Semitism today, to fight BDS and to make sure there is no hate for Jews allowed anywhere around the world, and certainly not in Canada.”

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## Trudeau warns against modern anti-Semitism in apology for turning away Jewish refugees fleeing Nazis

STEVEN CHASE ▶

OTTAWA

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This article was published more than 1 year ago. Some information in it may no longer be current.

243 COMMENTS SHARE



Ana Maria Gordon, second from left, who is the only surviving Canadian passenger of the MS St. Louis, stands with family and fellow survivors during a formal apology from the Canadian Government over the fate of the MS St. Louis and its passengers in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Wednesday, Nov. 7, 2018.

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau formally apologized Wednesday for a shameful episode in Canada's history, when this country turned away more than 900 German Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi terror and persecution.

Canada's 1939 refusal to grant asylum to the refugees on the MS St. Louis ocean liner and its callous attitude to what was unfolding in Europe was not only a dereliction of moral duty but helped embolden Adolf Hitler as he set about murdering millions of Jewish people, Mr. Trudeau said.

## APPENDIX: TIMELINE

### JANUARY 30, 1933

Adolf Hitler, as the leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party), is appointed Chancellor of Germany after being democratically elected to the German parliament, known as the *Reichstag*.

### 1933

The first Nazi laws exclude Jews from the civil service, the medical and legal professions, and the arts. Schools and universities are "Aryanized". Jewish children are denied access to public education.

### APRIL 1, 1933

The first state-directed boycott of Jewish businesses and professional services such as lawyers, doctors and dentists.

### MAY 18, 1934

#### **Reich Flight Tax**

The Reich Flight Tax is revised to target emigrating Jews who are charged a tax of 25 percent of their wealth. While Nazi policy officially encouraged Jewish emigration until October 1941, the disproportionately high taxes forced Jews to forfeit much of their wealth.

### SEPTEMBER 15, 1935

#### **Nuremberg Race Laws**

Jews are forbidden from marrying "Aryan" Germans and stripped of their German citizenship, losing all civil and political rights.

### APRIL 27, 1938

The Nazi Party orders the registration of all Jewish businesses, bank balances, accounts and real estate holdings. Sixty to seventy percent of Jewish businesses in Germany are liquidated.

### AUGUST 17, 1938

#### **The Second Executive Order on the Law on the Alteration of Family and Personal Names**

Jews without evidently Jewish names are required to adopt the middle names "Sara" (for women) or "Israel" (for men) on their passports and identity cards in order to clearly identify them as Jewish.

### OCTOBER 5, 1938

All German passports held by Jews are invalidated and must be surrendered. Only passports stamped with the letter "J" for Jude (Jew) are valid.

### NOVEMBER 9–10, 1938

#### ***Kristallnacht***

A state-directed riot against Jews destroys Jewish businesses and synagogues across Germany and Austria. Jews are forced to pay an "atonement tax" of over one billion Reichsmarks for the damage caused by rioters.

### NOVEMBER 12, 1938

#### ***The Decree on the Exclusion of Jews from German Economic Life***

All Jewish-owned businesses are closed and ordered to be "Aryanized" or liquidated.

### NOVEMBER 28, 1938

The Reich Ministry of the Interior restricts the freedom of movement of Jews.

### DECEMBER 3, 1938

#### ***Decree on the Utilization of Jewish Property***

All Jewish assets are frozen, and Jews are forbidden from purchasing or selling art, jewelry or items containing precious metal.

### SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

Germany invades Poland. Two days later, Great Britain and France declare war on Germany. The Second World War begins.

### LATE 1941

The Final Solution, the Nazi policy to exterminate all Jews, begins.

### 1942

Mass deportations of millions of Jews to the concentration camps provides the Nazis with warehouses of confiscated property, including clothing and other valuables.

## APPENDIX: GLOSSARY

**Antisemitism:** Opposition or hatred of Jews. As a term, it came into widespread use in the 1870s. Subsequently, it has come to denote hatred of Jews in all of its forms throughout history.

**Artefact:** An object made by a human being, typically one of cultural or historical interest, used by historians to learn about the past.

**Aryan:** A term perverted by the Nazis to mean a so-called “master race,” considered to be superior to all other races. The Germans were the prime example of Aryan stock according to Nazi theory. Dutch, Flemish and Scandinavians were also considered Aryan. The idealized Aryan was blond, blue-eyed, tall and muscular. The term was also applied to non-Jewish Europeans, although Nazis viewed these people as having less worth than Nordics.

**Aryanization:** The forced transfer of Jewish-owned businesses to German “Aryan” ownership for which Jews received little or no compensation. The Aryanization process had two stages: the so-called “voluntary” stage, from 1933 to 1938, when Jews were excluded from German economic life, and the “compulsory” stage that began immediately after Kristallnacht. Even after the war, most of these transfers were not overturned or rectified.

**Assets:** What one owns that has monetary value.

**Assimilated:** A process by which Jews let go of traditional dress, customs and laws and adopt the cultural and societal traditions of their countries. Assimilated Jews looked and sounded the same as their non-Jewish neighbours.

**Boycott:** Refusal to buy a product or patronize a store. Often used as a form of protest or coercion.

**Concentration Camps:** The Nazis established prison camps shortly after assuming power in 1933 to hold and isolate political opponents and those considered “racially” undesirable, such as Jews and Roma and Sinti. Most of the approximately 1,800 camps were transit or labour camps. The first were Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. After the occupation of Poland, extermination camps were established for mass murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Chelmno and Majdanek.

**Extermination Camps:** Special camps whose sole purpose was to murder unwanted persons in the Third Reich and conquered territories. The primary victims were Jews, but other victims included Slavs, homosexuals, Roma and Sinti, and the physically and mentally disabled. The extermination camps included Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor and Treblinka, while Auschwitz and Majdanek were both concentration and extermination camps. These six camps killed over 3.2 million people over the course of the Holocaust.

**Emigration:** The act of leaving your own country to settle in another country permanently.

**Final Solution:** The Nazi code name for the plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe, intended as a resolution to what the Nazis called the “Jewish Question.” The plan was formalized at the Wannsee Conference, held in a suburb of Berlin in January 1942.

**Hitler, Adolf (1889–1945):** Leader of the Nazi Party from 1921 until 1945. Hitler became Chancellor of the Third Reich from 1933 to 1945. He outlined his plans for territorial conquest and expressed his hatred for Jews in his autobiography *Mein Kampf*, written in 1923. On January 30, 1942, Hitler set in motion the destruction and murder of six million Jews. He committed suicide in an underground bunker in Berlin on April 30, 1945.

**Holocaust:** The mass murder of nearly six million European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II. Many individuals and groups were persecuted and suffered during the Holocaust, but only the Jews were targeted for total “extermination.” The term literally means a burnt sacrifice, or sacred burning. The biblical word “Shoah,” meaning catastrophe, is the Hebrew equivalent.

**Intergenerational:** Relating to, affecting or involving several generations of people.

**Nazi:** A member of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) founded in 1919 and brought to power in 1933 under Adolf Hitler.

**Nazism:** The ideology of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party and the party’s system of rule from 1933 to 1945. Also, a form of fascism. The ideology opposed liberalism, parliamentary democracy, communism and socialism.

**Nuremberg Race Laws:** Laws which stated that only a person of “German blood” could be a German citizen. Jews were redefined as second-class citizens. A Jew was defined as someone who had three or four Jewish grandparents. People with one or two Jewish grandparents were considered to be Mischlinge (of mixed race). Although Mischlinge were initially the subject of some debate, ultimately anyone with even a single Jewish grandparent was at risk under the Nuremberg Laws.

**Primary Source:** Original materials from the time period under study and which offer first-hand accounts or evidence relating to the research. Primary sources include newspapers, photographs, literature, art, interviews, eyewitnesses, diaries and artefacts.

**Propaganda:** An organized plan to promote biased information, derogatory ideas or practices, transmitted in speeches, slogans, posters, newspapers, film, etc.

**Reconciliation:** The process by which individuals or communities attempt to make two opposite beliefs, ideas or situations agree and to come to a mutual understanding or acceptance.

**Reich:** German for nation, state or empire. The Third Reich is the term most often used to refer to the German state from 1933 to 1945.

**Restitution:** The act of restoring something lost or stolen to its proper owner, or compensation for an injury or loss.

**Second World War:** A war fought from 1939 to 1945, in which Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, the United States, China and other allies defeated Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Japan. After Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Britain declared war against Germany. Canada entered the war shortly after. The United States entered the war after the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941. The war ended with the surrender of Germany in 1945.

**Visa:** An endorsement on a passport or a separate document which permits the holder to enter or leave a country.

## APPENDIX: RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### RESTITUTION, RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE

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Minow, Martha. *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/8665>)

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Pross, Christian. *Paying for the Past: The Struggle over Reparations for Surviving Victims of the Nazi Terror*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/5417>)

Slyomovics, Susan. *How to Accept German Reparations*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/179>)

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\*De Waal, Edmund. *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Family's Century of Art and Loss*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/2534>)

\*Eisenstein, Bernice. *I was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2006. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/4007>)

Epstein, Helen. *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1979. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/4010>)

Rosensaft, Menachem Z. (Editor). *God, Faith & Identity from the Ashes: Reflections of Children and Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2015. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/6845>)

Waldstein Wilkes, Helen. *Letters from the Lost: A Memoir of Discovery*. Edmonton: AU Press, Athabasca University, 2010. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/4124>)

Wittenberg, Jonathan. *My Dear Ones: One Family and the Holocaust: A Story of Enduring Hope and Love*. London: William Collins, 2017. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/7196>)

### RISE OF NAZISM, ARYANIZATION & ANTISEMITIC DECREES

Burleigh, Michael and Wolfgang Wipperman. *The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/4767>)

Evans, Richard J. *The Coming of the Third Reich*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/6575>)

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Vincent, Isabel. *Hitler's Silent Partners: Swiss Banks, Nazi Gold, and the Pursuit of Justice*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1997. (<https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/3988>)

\* Resources identified as suitable for senior secondary students



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