

**EPISODE 1 GOING TO WAR:**  
British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) **Activity One:**  
**Using Historical Criteria****MISSION**

Using assessment criteria to determine historical significance, explore whether the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan should be considered one of the most significant factors in Canada's development during the 20th century.

**KEY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS****What key knowledge and skills will student acquire as a result of this activity?**

- **Learn** to apply assessment criteria to the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP)
- **Evaluate**, through assessment criteria, whether the BCATP should be considered historically significant.
- **Assess** the impact of the BCATP on the development of Canada's aviation infrastructure, and build an argument that the BCATP should, or should not, be considered historically significant.
- Analyze and prioritize events in Canada's history.
- **Examine** a commonly used resource to establish and challenge what is/should be considered historically significant.
- **Communicate**, in a report, a determination of whether or not the BCATP should be considered one of the most significant factors in Canada's development during the 20th century.

**HISTORICAL CONCEPTS**

For the purposes of this activity, students will be working with two key historical concepts.

**Historical Significance:** Events that are historically significant result in changes that greatly affect a region or nation, leaving an enduring legacy for years after the event.

**Continuity and Change:** Continuity and change are an integral part of history. Even within key events and issues, various elements can change. Historical events may also mean progress for one group, but decline for another.

## BACKGROUND

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Between 1940 and 1945, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) trained more than 131,553 pilots and aircrews from Commonwealth countries that included Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, as well as the United States, and several German-occupied European countries. Pilots, air gunners, wireless operators and navigators trained in nearly 200 BCATP facilities in every Canadian province from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

To support the training centres, more than 100,000 men and women were connected to ground crews servicing the training centres. The influx of men, women and materials supported local economies, as new spin-off businesses and services emerged.

## USING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA TO ESTABLISH HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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### How is the historical significance of an event evaluated?

One common practice used by historians to evaluate information during their research is the use of assessment criteria. An issue or event is determined to have historical significance when it meets the criteria. Historians will use assessment criteria to answer questions such as the following:

1. **Short-term impact:** Did this program have a short-term impact?
2. **Enduring implications:** Did the impact of this program endure for years and/or decades?
3. **Number of people affected:** Did it affect a few people or a large number of people?
4. **Local and national implications:** What were the local implications? National implications?
5. **International Implications:** Did it have international implications?



No. 2 Service Flying Training School, Uplands, Ontario, 1941.  
Credit: Nicholas Morant, Department of National Defence  
Library and Archives Canada—PA-190248



## ACTIVITY

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1. In small groups (3-4 students per group), students will research the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) to gather background information.
2. Each group will develop its own assessment criteria, then apply these criteria to its determination of the historical significance of the BCATP.
3. Each group will write a report based on its findings, arguing either FOR or AGAINST the BCATP as a historically significant factor in Canada's development during the 20th century.
4. Each group will report its findings to the class.
5. After completing this activity, students can begin work on Activity Two for this episode.

## ONLINE SOURCES

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### Primary Documents

**The War Diary of the No. 9 Centralia, Ontario Flying Training School:**

[heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac\\_reel\\_c12348/11?r=0&s=1](http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c12348/11?r=0&s=1)

**Veterans Affairs Canada: British Commonwealth Air Training Program:** [www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war/british-commonwealth-air-training-plan#page1](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war/british-commonwealth-air-training-plan#page1)

**Veterans Affairs Canada (PDF):** [www.veterans.gc.ca/pdf/cr/pi-sheets/britcom.pdf](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/pdf/cr/pi-sheets/britcom.pdf)

**Bomber Command Museum:** [www.bombercommandmuseum.ca/bcatp.html](http://www.bombercommandmuseum.ca/bcatp.html)

**British Commonwealth Air Training Program:** [www.airmuseum.ca/bcatp.html](http://www.airmuseum.ca/bcatp.html)

**History of the BCATP:** [www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/docs/Aerodrome\\_e.pdf](http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/docs/Aerodrome_e.pdf)

**Royal Canadian Air Force:** [www.aviation.ca/2015111520687/news/canada/military/royal-canadian-air-force/20687-national-success-story-canada-and-the-british-commonwealth-air-training-plan-1939-1945](http://www.aviation.ca/2015111520687/news/canada/military/royal-canadian-air-force/20687-national-success-story-canada-and-the-british-commonwealth-air-training-plan-1939-1945)

**Royal Canadian Air Force:**

[www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/history-heritage/british-commonwealth-air-training-plan/index.page](http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/history-heritage/british-commonwealth-air-training-plan/index.page)

**Library and Archives Canada:** [www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/militaire/025002-7000-f.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/militaire/025002-7000-f.html)

**Canadian War Museum:**

[www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/chrono/1931air\\_training\\_plan\\_e.shtml](http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/chrono/1931air_training_plan_e.shtml)

**Related Newspaper Articles (BCATP):**

[www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/canadawar/britishairplan\\_e.shtml](http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/canadawar/britishairplan_e.shtml)

[www.airmuseum.ca/reprints/ap/AP\\_43jan.pdf](http://www.airmuseum.ca/reprints/ap/AP_43jan.pdf)



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