

# Welcome

Dear Educator,

Thank you for leading the Student Vote program for the local elections, happening throughout British Columbia this October.

We know the beginning of the school year is a busy time, and we appreciate the time you are dedicating to the program.

The Student Vote experience can foster a sense of belonging by helping students learn about themselves and understand others. This can be achieved through collaborative problem solving, exploring multiple perspectives, and setting and achieving personal and class goals.

Numerous Student Vote program evaluations have found that participating in the program has a positive impact on students' knowledge and understanding of government and elections, on their sense of civic responsibility and confidence in participating in the electoral process.

The program also provides an opportunity for students to take their newfound knowledge home and engage in conversations about the election with their family.

As part of CIVIX's current priorities for this school year, you will see an emphasis in building constructive dialogue skills among students.

Heightened social tensions, and the erosion of democratic norms around the world, only underscore the need for constructive dialogue skills. Democracy requires bridges between different perspectives.

On the following pages, you will find guiding principles for classroom discussion and activities for co-creating a 'norms of agreement' with students. Developing classroom norms with your students is a great way to ensure a safe and caring classroom environment, and encourage respectful discussion.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact our team at [hello@civix.ca](mailto:hello@civix.ca).

Please be sure to visit the project website for videos, slide decks, digital activity sheets and more:  
[www.studentvote.ca/bclocal2022](http://www.studentvote.ca/bclocal2022)

Wishing you and your students a great election,

The CIVIX Team

# Acknowledgements

CIVIX is a non-partisan, national registered charity dedicated to building the skills and habits of active and informed citizenship among young Canadians.



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## Resource Development Team

We would like to thank the countless educators who, over the years, have contributed their ideas and feedback to the development of this resource.

## Copyright Notice

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# How to Use This Resource

This resource is intended to improve civic literacy, introduce the concepts of democracy and elections, increase awareness about government in British Columbia, and teach students how to effectively participate as responsible citizens in their community.

The lessons build upon each other, but they can also be used as stand-alone activities depending on the needs of your classroom and schedule.

Below is a brief description of the components of each lesson.

## **Guiding Questions:**

Critical queries to bring a clear focus to the lesson and direct student learning. Share these questions with students at the beginning of the lesson to support an awareness of the overarching Learning Intentions and to enhance engagement.

## **Overview:**

Provides a brief summary of the learning and activities of the lesson.

## **Learning Intentions:**

Concrete knowledge and competencies that students are expected to have acquired or are working towards from the activities completed in each lesson.

## **Strategies:**

Each lesson has been broken down into three segments. You are encouraged to pick and choose from the strategies and related support tools based on the needs of your classroom and available time.

- **Starter:** Suggested opening activity, meant to pique interest in the topic and lesson.
- **Activities:** A series of key activities that help students understand and apply the essential concepts, and develop key competencies.
- **Consolidation:** Concluding questions and tasks to summarize and reflect on what was learned throughout the lesson.

## **Adaptations and Supports:**

A few reminders and suggestions for language learners, culturally responsive pedagogy and accessibility as well as accommodation considerations.

## **Background Information for Teachers:**

This information covers key terms and concepts related to the theme of the lesson. The purpose is to enhance teacher knowledge and understanding. Not all terms and concepts are covered in the lesson.

# Guiding Principles for Classroom Discussion

While discussion can occur in all kinds of settings, formal and informal, the classroom affords educators the opportunity to approach discussion in a uniquely structured and intentional way. This is not to say that spontaneous or unstructured discussion is not valuable. Some of your best classroom discussions may be spontaneous.

However, with intention, preparation, and practice, educators can help students systematically build constructive discussion habits regardless of context. Here are some guiding principles you may want to consider within the context of classroom discussion.

## Build Community

Students will be more likely to contribute to a discussion if they feel like they are in a safe and comfortable environment. Begin the year with activities that allow students to share their interests and backgrounds, and co-create a set of classroom norms (page 6).

## De-centre Yourself

Teachers are often used to doing most of the talking in a classroom. Discussion can often look like a lighthouse, with the educator at the centre engaging sequentially with students, often the most vocal in the class. The best discussion occurs when students are engaging with each other, with the teacher acting as a facilitator.

## Embrace Structure

While interesting conversations may occur spontaneously in the classroom, student discussion can produce better outcomes when implemented with intention and structure, particularly at the beginning of the year. Using discussion protocols takes a bit more planning and effort but they can help build more equitable conversations and ensure more voices are heard.

## Start Slow

When it comes to teaching discussion skills, don't feel like you have to jump into the deep end with your topics. Practicing with lower-stakes issues can help build skills and prepare for weightier discussions. Is Thor better than Captain Marvel? Should schools provide free lunches to students? Emotions can get high no matter the topic, but starting slow can help lay the foundation.

## Recognize Different Discussion Approaches

Some students will be outgoing and chatty while others are reserved and quiet. Many will be somewhere in-between. Some students formulate their thoughts by talking, and others need to think for a bit first before they feel comfortable contributing. Considering the different discussion styles of your students and using various discussion protocols will help you get the most out of these exchanges.

## Go Small, Before Big

Students may initially feel more comfortable voicing their opinions in smaller groups. For any discussion, consider starting with groups of two or three before moving to larger or full class discussion. Consider trying different combinations with small groups, such as mixing reserved and outspoken students, or keeping students with similar discussion styles together. Both strategies have their pros and cons.

For more best practices and a description of different discussion protocols, please refer to CIVIX's *Constructive Discussions Guide* at [www.politalks.ca](http://www.politalks.ca)

# Norms of Agreement

Creating a social contract or norms of agreement helps establish clear guidelines about behaviour and expectations, enables students to feel safe expressing their opinions, increases the range of voices heard in the classroom, and can help reduce instances of incivility.

Norms of agreement that are meaningful to your students require giving them ownership of what goes in it. Co-creating this agreement will help students feel that their voices matter and encourage them to hold each other accountable when norms are violated.

Once established, it is helpful to revisit the agreement in advance of and following your first few classroom discussions, and updating it as needed. Afterwards, reviewing the agreement monthly is a good strategy to promote commitment,

Please use or adapt the activities below as you see fit. You may want to split up the activities over multiple days.

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## 1 Reflection on Discussion (20-25 minutes)

- a) Begin with an introductory conversation about discussion. Have students discuss in pairs for a few minutes and then discuss as a whole class.

Guiding questions:

- What is the goal of discussion?
- How can we learn from it?
- Why is it important?

- b) As a class, create a working definition for discussion based on responses from the previous step. Or provide the following definition: "the act of exchanging ideas with others through focused conversation on a specific problem, question, or issue." Draw attention to the fact that discussion is different from debate, where the focus is on winning an argument, or pointing out weaknesses in your opponent's argument. The purpose of discussion is to exchange and deepen our understanding of a topic.

For an extended activity, ask students to work in pairs to complete a Frayer Model to further refine their understanding of discussion. A graphic organizer is provided on page 9.

- c) Next, collect student feedback related to their concerns about classroom discussion.

Post the following prompts on chart paper or as headings on the board.

- "Classroom discussion doesn't work very well when .. "
- "A reason I might not want to speak in class is ... "

Provide students with a few sticky notes to write their ideas for each prompt privately. Ask students to add their sticky notes to the chart paper for each prompt and sit back down. Afterwards, review the answers as a class, ensuring anonymity.

Alternatively, you could use Google Form for this activity to ensure students feel comfortable sharing their views.

- d) Repeat the process above using the following prompts related to effective classroom discussion:

- "I feel comfortable participating in discussion when ... "
- "What I like about a good class discussion is .... "

- e) As a transition into the next part of the activity, let students know that the responses will provide a starting point for creating class norms and agreements.

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## 2 Understand the Purpose of Norms (15 Minutes)

- a) Review the concept of norms. Classroom norms inform us of our responsibilities and how we are expected to behave towards each other.

Ask students to discuss the following questions using a Think-Pair-Share protocol (see page 10).

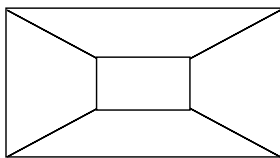
- Why is it important to have a shared understanding of a set of norms and expectations?
  - What could happen if we did not have a set of norms?
  - Should students be part of establishing classroom norms or should the teacher provide a list? Why?
- b) Draw on student responses from Activity 1 (Reflection on Discussion) to anticipate scenarios or problem areas, and brainstorm ways in which students and/or the teacher can respond in those situations. Some examples might include:
- A teacher wants to hear the opinions of all students before determining the focus topic of an assignment
  - A classmate says something other students consider offensive
  - Some students dominate classroom discussions
  - Some students may not feel comfortable speaking in front of others
  - Students want to share ideas with their teacher to improve the classroom environment
  - A student uses their phone during a peer's presentation

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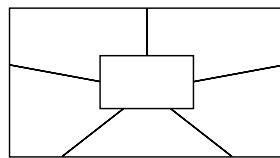
## 3 Co-creating Norms (35 minutes)

Once students have understood the purpose of establishing classroom norms, you can give them the opportunity to consider what they want these norms to include as individuals, in small groups, then as part of the class.

- a) Through a 'Placemat' activity, have students propose norms they believe are important in the classroom. This cooperative learning strategy allows students to individually think about, record, and share their ideas in groups and then reach a consensus on the most important norms.
- Divide students into groups of four or five. You can provide each group with one large sheet of paper divided into sections (one for each student and a centre block for the final group list). Alternatively, the activity could also be conducted with an online app, such as a Google doc or Jamboard.
  - Ask students to individually write down their proposed norms in their allotted space (suggested minimum of 3 norms per student).
  - Provide time for each student to share their recorded responses with the rest of their group without discussion from the other students.
  - Next, have each group decide, collectively, on the five most important norms and record them in the centre of the placemat - it is essential that all group members agree with the group list.



Four person group



Five person group

- b) As a class, create norms of agreement for the classroom. As each statement is agreed upon, include a discussion about the reasons for it and/or possible examples and characteristics. Consider using a T-Chart with the norms on the left and reasons on the right. (e.g. left column: "Raise our hands when we speak," right column: "To ensure one person is speaking at a time, and to show respect").

Sample norms:

- Listen actively (e.g., be attentive, check your body language).
- Show empathy.
- Respond with curiosity instead of judgement.
- Make comments using "I" statements.
- Criticize ideas, not individuals.
- Give everyone the opportunity to speak.
- Avoid making assumptions or generalizations about others.
- If you don't understand something, ask a question.
- Do not ask people to speak for their social/ethnic group.
- If someone shares an idea or opinion that helps your own learning, show appreciation.
- The right to pass.
- If you say something that offends someone, apologize, even if the offence was not intended.
- Always presume good intentions of those involved in the discussion.
- Strive for equitable participation from all members in the discussion.

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#### **4 Practice and Reflection (25 Minutes)**

Practice these norms by having a discussion on a low-stakes topic, such as 'cats are better than dogs.' Start with the discussion in small groups and then move to a whole-class discussion. Afterwards, debrief with the class:

- What went well and why?
- Did the class uphold the norms and expectations?
- Is there anything that can be improved?
- Revise the list as necessary

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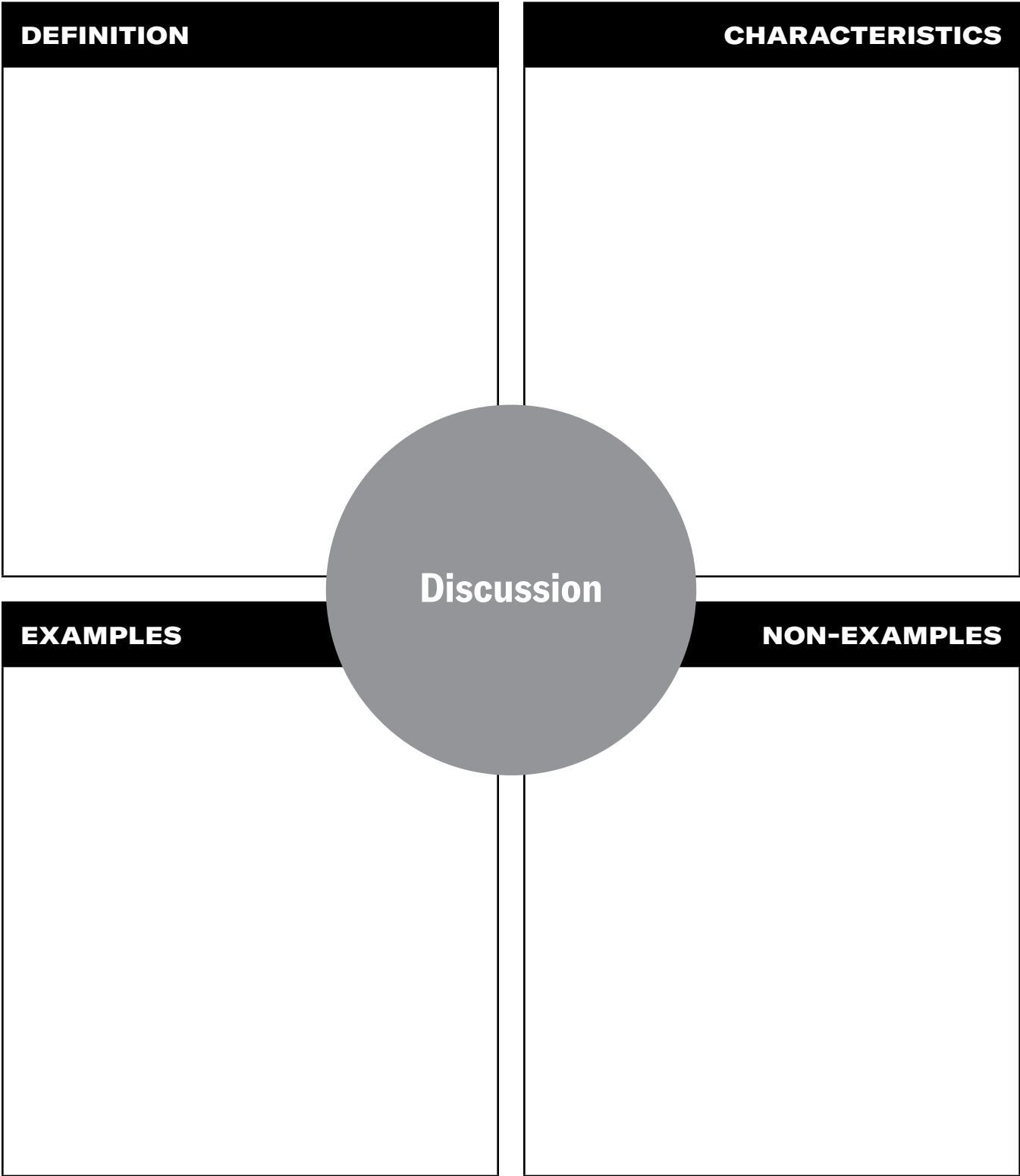
#### **5 Assessment (10 minutes)**

Provide students with a 1-1-1 Exit Card (page 11):

- One norm that was easy for you to practice
- One norm that you know you have to work on
- One topic you would like to discuss as a class in future



# What is Discussion?



# Think-Pair-Share

This foundational protocol is well-suited for discussion that starts with a specific prompt or text, and as a way to jumpstart small group or classroom discussion.

1. Provide students with a question or prompt.
2. Ask students to think about the prompt individually.
3. Divide students into pairs and ask them to exchange their thoughts and ideas.
4. After students have shared with their partner, expand the sharing into a whole class discussion
5. Optional: Ask students to reflect on the activity and to write down what they learned or how their thinking changed or expanded based on the conversation with peers.

## VARIATIONS

- “Think-Ink-Pair-Share” adds a written step, for practice articulating thoughts in writing.
- “Snowball” – instead of rejoining the class group from pairs, pairs join with each other to form a group of four to debrief anew. The process repeats until the class is one group.

## IMPLEMENTATION SUGGESTIONS

- “Think-Ink-Pair-Share” adds a written step, for practice articulating thoughts in writing.
- “Snowball” – instead of rejoining the class group from pairs, pairs join with each other to form a group of four to debrief anew. The process repeats until the class is one group.

## IMPLEMENTATION SUGGESTIONS

- Choose open-ended questions that are likely to get a variety of answers from students. For ex-ample: “What is the most important problem facing Canadians today?” or “What can schools do to improve the mental health of students?”
- Present students with a quote, image, or short piece of text that warrants reflection and inter-pretation.

**\*Note: we have not provided suggested timings for the activities to keep them flexible, but we suggest adding your own, and assigning a student timekeeper in each group.**

## 1-1-1 Exit Card: Classroom Norms

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| <b>1-1-1 EXIT CARD</b> |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>1</b>               | <b>One norm</b> that was easy for you to practice                   |
| <b>1</b>               | <b>One norm</b> you know that you have to work on                   |
| <b>1</b>               | <b>One topic</b> you would like to discuss as a class in the future |

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| <b>1-1-1 EXIT CARD</b> |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>1</b>               | <b>One norm</b> that was easy for you to practice                   |
| <b>1</b>               | <b>One norm</b> you know that you have to work on                   |
| <b>1</b>               | <b>One topic</b> you would like to discuss as a class in the future |

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# Lesson 1

## Democracy



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 **What does it mean to live in a democracy?**
- 2 **How can we support and maintain our democracy?**

### OVERVIEW

There are several guiding principles that act as the foundation of a democracy, such as fair elections, fundamental freedoms, political tolerance, citizen participation and the rule of law. Citizens have a responsibility to uphold and support these principles.

In this lesson, students reflect on and discuss the values they believe are important in society. Next, students explore the underlying principles of democracy, connecting them back to values that are important to them and looking at real-world examples. Afterwards, students discuss the obligation of citizens to stand by these principles and exercise their rights in a responsible manner.

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- evaluate the values they believe are important in society;
- describe the principles of democracy; and,
- analyze the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

## Starter

1. Review the photos in Slide Deck 1 and ask students what words or concepts come to mind.
2. Through a 'Placemat' activity, have students answer the question: What values are important in society? (e.g., justice, freedom, respect, community, fairness)

The Placemat Activity is a cooperative learning strategy that allows each student in a group to record their own ideas on a topic or question, before working with the rest of their group to reach a consensus on a response.

- a) Divide students into groups of four or five.
- b) Provide each group with one large sheet of paper divided into sections (one for each student and a centre block for the final group response). Alternatively, you can use a digital template, such as a Google Doc, to complete the activity.
- c) Ask students to respond individually to the question within their allotted space.
- d) Provide time for each student to share their recorded responses with the rest of their group without discussion or debate from the other students.
- e) Next, have each group decide, collectively, on the five most important values and record them in the centre of the placemat.
- f) Have each group write their list of values on sticky notes and post them on a wall or blackboard.
- g) Afterwards, order the sticky notes to see which were most common and create a master list.

## Activities

1. Review the idea of living in a democracy and the foundational principles using the "Democratic Principles" video and Handout 1.2.
  - Democracy by definition is "rule by the people," where a majority of the people are included in political decision-making.
  - A democratic society favours equal rights, freedom of speech, rule of law and political tolerance.
  - A healthy democracy requires responsible citizens who value the system of government and actively participate in society.
2. Through a class discussion, make connections between the democratic principles and the student responses from the *Starter* activity. Consider writing out the democratic principles and adding the sticky notes from the *Starter* activity underneath each principle. Some values may be connected to multiple principles.
3. Using Slide Deck 1 as a starting point, analyze examples of democratic principles in practice and the different ways they shape our lives. Ask students to share their own real-world examples with each slide.
4. Using a Think-Pair-Share protocol, have a closing discussion with the following prompts.
  - Is it important for citizens to support and uphold these principles? What would happen if no one cared?
  - Do our rights come with responsibilities? Explain using concrete examples. For example, the right to protest comes with the responsibility to do so peacefully and without violence.

## Consolidation

*Option 1:* Which concepts from this lesson about democratic principles are most important to remember? Use the exit card (Activity 1.2) to create six hashtags to describe what you learned from the lesson.

*Option 2:* Which principle is most important to you? Create a poster or digital artwork that reflects this principle and what it means to you.

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Language Learners</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.</li> <li>• Share the lesson videos before class discussions and activities.</li> <li>• Ensure that subtitles are on during videos.</li> <li>• Support students' understanding of democratic principles with additional real-world examples.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare democracy to other forms of governance representing different countries and cultures that have meaning for your students.</li> <li>• Students will come from different backgrounds and may have different opinions on democracy. Ensuring a safe place for respectful discussion is encouraged.</li> <li>• Review democratic principles in various social settings, inclusive of First Nations peoples, and diverse cultural groups.</li> <li>• Discuss the systemic barriers to equality faced by First Nations peoples, and other diverse cultural groups.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Accommodations</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative activities and discussion.</li> </ul>   |

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Democracy means rule by the people. There are several guiding principles that act as the foundation of a democracy. Citizens have a responsibility to uphold and support these principles.

#### **Equality and Human Rights:**

All individuals are valued equally, have equal opportunities and may not be discriminated against because of their race, religion, ethnicity, language, gender or sexual orientation. Fundamental rights include freedom of thought, opinion and assembly.

**Economic Freedom:** The government allows some private ownership of property and businesses. People are allowed to choose their own work and join labour unions. It is generally accepted that a free market should exist in a democracy and that government should not control the economy.

**Protected Rights:** In a democracy, there is a formal declaration of citizens' rights and freedoms. This document limits the powers of government, explains the freedoms that are guaranteed to all people and protects people from a government that might abuse its powers.

**The Rule of Law:** All are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination. No one is above the law – this includes elected officials, the police and members of the military.

#### **Control of the Abuse of Power:**

To protect corruption and abuses of power, democratic governments are often structured to limit the powers of government offices and those who work for them.

**Free and Fair Elections:** Elected officials are chosen every few years by the people in a free and fair manner. Adult citizens have the right to vote and run for office regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or economic status.

**Multi-Party Systems:** Multiple party systems provide the government with different viewpoints on issues and voters are given a choice of candidates, parties and policies to support.

**Citizen Participation:** Participation can take the form of running for office, voting in elections, becoming an informed citizen, debating issues, attending community meetings, paying taxes, serving on a jury and protesting. Citizen participation builds a stronger democracy.

#### **Accountability and Transparency:**

Elected and appointed officials are responsible for their actions and are accountable to the people. A transparent government holds public meetings and allows citizens to attend. The press and the public are kept informed regarding decisions being made.

**Independent Judiciary:** Courts and the judicial system are impartial. Judges and the judicial branch are free to act without influence or control from the executive and legislative branches of government. They should also not be corrupted or influenced by other individuals, businesses or political groups.

**Political Tolerance:** People who belong to different socioeconomic and ethnic groups, all hold unique and valued political views. Democratic societies strive to be politically tolerant, and the rights of minorities and other groups are protected. Those who are not in power must be allowed to organize and share their opinions.

#### **Accepting the Results of Elections:**

Free and fair elections have both winners and losers. The losers and their supporters must accept that they have lost an election as democracy depends on the peaceful transfer of power from one party to the next.

# HANDOUT 1.1: The Principles of Democracy

There are several guiding principles that act as the foundation of a democracy.

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- All people living in a democracy have guaranteed rights, such as freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of religion, and the right to organize and take part in peaceful protests.
  - In most democracies, individuals are valued equally regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, language, gender or sexual orientation.
  - In Canada, our fundamental freedoms and equality rights are protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, part of Canada's Constitution.
- 



- Adult citizens have the right to vote in elections to choose their political representatives.
  - Adult citizens also have the opportunity to run for political office.
  - There are no obstacles to voting and no threats made to citizens before or after an election.
  - In Canada, there must be elections to choose governments every five years or less.
- 



- Elected representatives are responsible for their actions. They must perform their duties according to the wishes of those they represent, not for themselves or other interests.
  - In a democracy, the media holds government to account and aims to keep citizens informed.
  - In Canada, elected representatives participate in activities like Question Period to be held to account for their actions and respond to questions from the opposition parties, and engage in meetings with the public.
- 



- Laws are enforced equally, fairly and consistently. This means that everyone, including government officials, the police and members of the military, must obey the law.
  - It also means that governments cannot punish people unless they have broken the law.
  - All Canadians have a responsibility to respect the laws of the land, even if they disagree with them.
- 



- Society is comprised of people with different cultural backgrounds, who practice different religions, come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, who have different gender identities or sexual orientations. The voices of these different groups are valued.
  - Democratic societies strive to be politically tolerant and the rights of minorities are protected.
  - Those who are not in power must be allowed to organize and share their opinions.
- 



- Citizen participation in government is more than just a right – it is a responsibility.
  - Participation includes voting in elections, being an informed citizen, debating issues, attending community meetings, paying taxes, serving on a jury and protesting.
  - Citizen participation builds a stronger democracy.
-

## ACTIVITY 1.2: Exit Slip – #Hashtags

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**WHICH HASHTAGS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE THE LESSON AND/OR IDENTIFY THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPTS?**

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

**DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT TODAY'S LESSON?**

---

**WHICH HASHTAGS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE THE LESSON AND/OR IDENTIFY THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPTS?**

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

**DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT TODAY'S LESSON?**



# Lesson 2

## Perspectives and Pluralism



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do people perceive things in different ways?
- 2 Is pluralism important in a democracy?
- 3 What actions can I take to contribute to pluralism in society?

### OVERVIEW

In democratic societies, people with different identities and perspectives must find ways to live together and work together for the common good.

In this lesson, students analyze how people may have different perceptions and perspectives of the same object, situation or issue. Next, students practice active listening while sharing their own perspectives about a particular topic and evaluate factors that influence their thinking. Afterwards, students discuss the concept of pluralism and the importance of diversity and inclusion in democratic society.

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- explain how people can have different interpretations or perspectives about the same situation or issue;
- practice active listening while considering others' perspectives;
- evaluate the importance of pluralism in a democratic society; and,
- analyze the actions I can take to support diversity and inclusion.

## Starter

What do you see? This hook activity uses optical illusions to show students that different people may have different perceptions of the same image, but it does not mean someone is right or wrong.

1. Explain to students that you are going to show them three images (Slide Deck 2) and they need to write down what they see first without discussing it with others.
2. Review the images again and invite students to share what they see. Informally poll the class on the options. Encourage students to see the opposite image compared to what they initially saw (Hint: By focusing on different elements of the image, you should be able to see different objects)
3. Debrief on the activity through a whole class discussion.

Key questions:

- Is there a “correct” way to see the images? Is someone right and someone else wrong?
- How did you feel towards people that saw the same image versus those who did not?
- Were you able to see the image differently once it was pointed it out?
- What is the main takeaway from this activity?

## Activities

1. Review the meaning of perception and perspective. Suggested external resource: [“Perception vs Perspective”](#), *Genie Deez*.
  - **Perception** is our interpretation of something. It is the ability to see, hear or become aware of something using one of our senses. People perceive things differently. We choose to select different aspects of something to focus our attention based on what interests us, what is familiar to us, or what we consider important.
  - **Perspective** is the way we see something. It is our point of view. Our perspectives are shaped by who we are, as well as our environment and life experiences. For example, people living in different countries may have different priorities in life, based on their beliefs and perceptions of happiness.
2. Select a discussion topic from below and distribute copies of Activity 2.1. Provide students with a few minutes to write individual responses to the questions. The responses can be informal bullets.
  - Final exams should be abolished.
  - All Canadians should be required to vote.
  - Schools should eliminate dress codes.
  - It is important to spend money exploring space.

If this activity is being completed in a remote learning setting, consider using a tool such as Flipgrid, where students record video responses.

### TEACHER NOTE

Flipgrid is a website that allows teachers to create “grids” to facilitate video discussions. Each grid is similar to a message board where teachers can pose questions, and their students can post video responses that appear in a tiled grid display.

3. Organize students into groups and have them share their responses to the discussion topic, as well as the influences on their thinking. Review tips for active listening prior to the group activity (Handout 2.2).
4. Debrief on the activity as a class.
  - Did listening to others’ perspectives influence your thinking about the topic?
  - Can you draw any connections between how people’s life influences and experiences have shaped their thinking on the topic? What are your thoughts on what lies beneath the surface?
5. Discuss the concept of pluralism. Is pluralism important in a democratic society?

Review:

- Pluralism is the idea that people of different beliefs, backgrounds, and lifestyles can coexist in the same society and participate equally in the political process.
- Disagreement can cause us to question our ideas and consider if our current way is the best way of thinking about a problem.
- Democratic societies strive to respect and engage with the voices of different groups. Those who are not in power must be allowed to organize and share their opinions.

Listen to young Canadians share their views on what pluralism means to them by watching the [“What is Pluralism?”](#) video by Inspirit Foundation. At minute 1:28, the speaker says, “I don’t think that tolerance and diversity are enough.”

Key questions:

- What did they mean? What does this mean to you?
- Organize students in groups for the activity. In the centre of chart paper, or on a digital platform such as Jamboard, write or type this statement in the centre. Give students 3 minutes to respond to the statement within their groups. Allow groups to share their key points with the class. Students will apply these ideas in the *Consolidation* activity.

## Consolidation

Use a Circles of Action routine to close out the lesson. This routine is designed to foster students' feelings and motivations towards taking responsible action.

Based on what I learned about pluralism, what can I do to contribute...

- In my inner circle (of friends, family, the people I know)?
- In my community (my school, my neighborhood)?
- In the world (beyond my immediate environment)

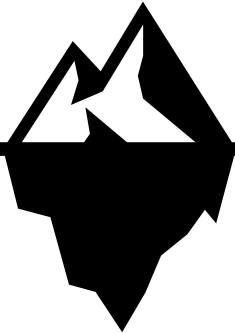
## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Language Learners</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.</li><li>• Share the lesson videos before class discussions and activities.</li><li>• Ensure that subtitles are on during videos.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will come from different backgrounds and may have different opinions on democracy.</li><li>• Ensuring a safe place for respectful discussion and diverse viewpoints is encouraged.</li><li>• Discuss the systemic barriers to democratic participation faced by First Nations peoples, and other diverse cultural groups.</li></ul> |
| <b>Accommodations &amp; Accessibility</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs or Google Jamboard for collaborative activities and discussion.</li></ul>   |



## ACTIVITY 2.1: You and Your Perspectives

Answer the following questions in the right-hand column.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>What is the discussion topic?</b></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Tip of the Iceberg</b></p> <p>What is your position on the topic? What do you see on the surface?</p>  |  |
|  <p><b>Beneath the Surface</b></p> <p>List the influences on your feelings and behaviour.</p> <p>These factors can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Events from your past</li><li>• Immediate circumstances</li><li>• Beliefs</li><li>• Preferences</li><li>• Cultural values, customs, and traditions</li></ul> |  |
| <p><b>Describe how a significant experience or influential person has shaped your perspective.</b></p>   |  |

## HANDOUT 2.2: Being an Active Listener

Here are some helpful reminders about how to be an active listener.

---



### CHECK YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.

Show an openness to ideas. Avoid crossing your arms.

Try to maintain neutral facial expressions.

---



### BE ATTENTIVE

Avoid distractions, such as devices or other people.

Block out your own thoughts.

Make sure your attention is on the speaker. Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.

---



### DON'T INTERRUPT

When the speaker is sharing, remember it is not about you and your thoughts. Interrupting sends negative signals to the speaker and those around you.

Keep your questions or comments until the end.

---



### SHOW EMPATHY

Imagine being in someone else's shoes. Try to feel what the speaker is feeling and consider their perspective.

---



### BE CURIOUS, LEARNING IS THE GOAL

Asking questions demonstrates that you are curious and want to learn something new. It can also help you clarify anything that was unclear. Curiosity expands our empathy.

Examples: How did you feel when....? Can you tell me more about...?

---

# Lesson 3

## Informed Citizenship



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

**1 How does information influence my decisions?**

**2 What are the opportunities and challenges of using online platforms?**

### OVERVIEW

Being a responsible citizen involves seeking out information from a variety of sources and comparing perspectives on issues of importance.

In this lesson, students experience the relationship between the information we consume and the decisions we make through a hands-on interactive activity. Before participating in a mock local election, students learn about the candidates and election issues by reviewing information from one of two polarized social media feeds. After the vote, students discuss how what they read may have influenced their decision. Next, students learn about how the internet has changed the way we consume and share information, and discuss the implications of getting information from online platforms.

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- analyze how news and information can influence our opinion on people, events and issues;
- describe how algorithms personalize the information we see online;
- analyze the implications with receiving information through online platforms; and,
- describe actions for being an informed citizen and making responsible choices.

## Starter

Start with an opening conversation about making informed decisions. Ask students to consider how they would become informed to vote in the following scenarios.

- a) School council election
- b) Government election

Using a Turn and Talk protocol, ask students to discuss the following questions with a partner.

- What actions would you take to learn about the people running for election?
- Which sources of information would you rely on and why?
- Is it important to be informed about the options before making a decision? Why or why not?

## Activities

1. Complete the *Feed for Thought: Election Edition* activity found at the CIVIX website [news literacy.ca](https://www.news literacy.ca) (free registration).

### TEACHER NOTE

A paper version of *Feed for Thought* is also available at [news literacy.ca](https://www.news literacy.ca). As an alternative to the online activity, you can print and distribute the two different feeds and ask students to vote using a show of hands or by using paper ballots (Activity 3.1).

- a) **Introduce the Scenario.** There is a high-stakes election coming up, and you are going to vote in it. There are two candidates to choose from, and people in your community feel strongly about who should win. It is expected to be a close race. Before you cast your ballot, you will learn about the candidates and election issues by reviewing information on social media to help make your choice. The social media feed has a mix of articles from news media and posts from friends and community members.
- b) **Read the Feeds.** Distribute the provided link to students and it will randomly assign students one of the two feeds (each feed more favourably supports one of the two candidates). Do not inform students about the two different feeds. Give students 10 minutes to review the information.
- c) **Vote.** Have students vote for the candidates using the online voting button located at the bottom of the social media feed. You can access the results from your [news literacy.ca](https://www.news literacy.ca) dashboard. Announce the vote totals to the class.

- d) **Debrief.** Through a whole-class discussion, ask students why they voted the way they did and what information shaped their decision.

Over the course of the discussion, it should become apparent that some students were provided with different information than others. At an appropriate point in the discussion, share the fact that there were two different feeds. You can also review the feeds side-by-side to compare the differences (preview links are available [news literacy.ca](https://www.news literacy.ca)).

Further questions to prompt discussion:

- How did you feel about the results of the vote before you knew there were two feeds? Were you surprised by the outcome? Why or why not?
  - How might two people end up with such different news feeds?
  - What are the consequences of people consuming different facts and opinions?
  - Do you think people should be exposed to different perspectives or more than one side of an issue before making their decision?
2. Watch the “Behind the Screens: Who decides what I see online?” video and/or the “Algorithms and Filter Bubbles” video, and/or review Slide Deck 3 to introduce the concepts of algorithms and filter bubbles, and the effects of online platforms on democracy.
  3. Divide students into pairs or small groups for a discussion about their own experiences.

### TEACHER NOTE

The content in the “Behind the Screens: Who decides what I see online?” and “Algorithms and Filter Bubbles” videos is very similar. You can choose to show either option, or both.

Key questions:

- You have probably observed information or advertisements online that were based on your previous internet searches or content that you read or watched. Can you share an example from your own life of when this has happened? Are there other times you have noticed algorithms personalizing your internet experience?
- What is your understanding of how recommendation algorithms work?

4. As a class, briefly discuss the implications of online personalization.

Key information and questions:

- Information environments that are tailored to individuals can have an impact on informed citizenship and democracy.
- What might happen to our understanding of people, issues, and events if we only see news or information we like or agree with?
- What impact might ‘filter bubbles’ have on discussions of divisive political issues?
- Should we make an effort to avoid ending up in a filter bubble? What steps might we take to become exposed to different perspectives?

## Consolidation

Ask students to fill out the Exit Card (Activity 3.2).

- **WHAT?** Describe what you learned today. What stood out? What was your ‘a-ha’ moment?
- **SO WHAT?** Identify the implications. What does it mean for you? How does it affect you?
- **NOW WHAT?** Define a course of action. What actions will you take?

Alternatively, ask students to record one ‘a-ha’ moment from the discussion on a sticky note and attach it to the board.

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Language Learners</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., online platforms, algorithms, filter bubbles).</li> <li>• Share the "Behind the Screens" and/or "Algorithms and Filter Bubbles" videos before class discussions and activities.</li> <li>• Ensure that subtitles are on during the videos.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students may come from households with varying access to the internet, and have different levels of familiarity with social media. Keep in mind that not all students will have prior knowledge of the social media feeds being emulated in the ‘Feed for Thought’ activity.</li> <li>• Encourage students to share their own experiences with online platforms and social media.</li> <li>• Ensure that you are open and encouraging of diverse viewpoints your students may share.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Accommodations &amp; Accessibility</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, considering using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.</li> </ul>   |



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS**

As citizens living in a democracy, we have a responsibility to stay informed about the issues that matter to us and to society. This is true all the time, but especially when we must make a meaningful choice at the ballot box.

The introduction of the internet and the rise of social media have been significant for news and information, and complicated for citizens.

Where traditional news organizations were once the **gatekeepers** of information and the only ones with the resources to disseminate it — printing presses and TV stations are costly to purchase and operate — the internet allows anyone, anywhere to be a publisher.

The rise of blogging and social media a generation ago was widely viewed as the democratization of information, bringing new voices into public discourse and leading to positive social change. The reality of online communication has been more complex.

When news came only from traditional or **legacy media** — newspapers, TV, and radio — there was always someone who stood between audiences and information, a person or process that filtered the stories or content, checked facts and packaged stories for public consumption.

Where human editors and producers were once the only gatekeepers who decided what news audiences saw, on the internet, that job belongs to algorithms, which are sets of instructions that tell computers how to perform specific tasks, like sorting information. Social media **algorithms** work in such a way that we are more

likely to see content that is similar to what we already like or agree with. Our social media feeds never give the whole picture.

Since people have become such heavy adopters of **social media**, they now rely on these sites (such as Facebook or TikTok) for news. The problem is that social media platforms never intended to be news organizations, and there are consequences for informed citizenship when people rely on friends and the results of algorithms to find out about what is happening in the world.

Informed citizenship involves seeking out news and information from a variety of sources, comparing perspectives and keeping up with new developments. There are things you can do to make sure you are informed, particularly when there is so much information available online.

### ACTIVITY 3.1: Voice your choice!

Use the sample ballots below to conduct a vote for the candidates running for election. Tabulate the results and announce them to the class.

---

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>WENDY ABBOTT</b> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>TRACY BELL</b>   | <input type="radio"/> |

---

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>WENDY ABBOTT</b> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>TRACY BELL</b>   | <input type="radio"/> |

## ACTIVITY 3.2: What? So what? What next?

### **WHAT?**

**Describe what you learned today.**

What stood out?

What was your 'a-ha' moment?

### **SO WHAT?**

**Identify the implications.**

What does it mean for you?

How does it affect you?

### **NOW WHAT?**

**Define a course of action.**

What actions will you take?

# Lesson 4

## Levels of Government



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What is a representative democracy?
- 2 How is government structured in Canada?
- 3 How do the different levels of government affect me?

### OVERVIEW

Canada has different levels of government; each with its own elected representatives and areas of responsibility.

In this lesson, students examine the different levels of government, including leadership roles, elected representatives and division of responsibilities. Afterwards, students contribute to a class bulletin where they use articles, images or social media posts to identify government services or decisions that influence their lives. In the *Consolidation* activity, students analyze which level of government has the most impact in their life and whether it is important to know which level of government is responsible for what.

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- describe our government system in Canada;
- distinguish between the levels of government; and,
- identify government responsibilities and explain how they relate to or directly affect their lives.

## Starter

*'Write the Room' activity:*

1. Post three pieces of chart paper around the room and label each one with the name of a level of government (federal, provincial, local or First Nations).
2. As students enter the classroom, ask students to write something they know about each level of government. Students can also write on sticky notes and post them on the chart paper.
3. Review students' existing knowledge as a class.

## Activities

1. Review the structure of government in Canada using the 'Levels of Government' video and/or Slide Deck 4.

Have students create a 'sketchnote' to summarize the information. Sketchnotes are rich visual notes created from a mix of handwriting, drawings, and visual elements like arrows, boxes, and lines. An exemplar provided on the project website under Lesson 4.

Alternatively, students could create a digital presentation (slides) with images and text.

2. Review Handout 4.1 and discuss the division of responsibilities as a class. Explain to students that the levels of government work together on many issues, such as healthcare. For example, the federal government focuses on providing funding to the provinces and territories (through the Canada Health Transfer), as well as health protection, disease surveillance and prevention, including approving and buying vaccines. The provincial government handles health-care delivery, including hospitals and doctors, health promotion and public health initiatives such as vaccination campaigns. Local governments focus on paramedic services, sanitation, disease control, as well as setting up vaccination clinics.
3. Create a class bulletin board where students can identify how government services or decisions influence their lives. Students can contribute by attaching photos, news articles, headlines, social media posts, and other related content for each level of government. Ask each student to make two contributions for each level of government.

## Consolidation

1. Ask students to write down a new piece of knowledge on a sticky note for each level of government and put it on the chart paper from the *Starter* activity.
2. Ask students to write a response to one or both of the following questions (Activity 4.2).
  - Which level of government has the most impact in my life, and why? Explain with two examples.
  - Is it important to know which level of government is responsible for what? Explain.

## Extended Learning

Ask students to pick an issue that matters to them and analyze how the government could take action to improve the conditions. Students should advocate for government action through a format of their own choosing. This could include writing a letter or email to the minister(s) in charge of their related issue or the elected representative at the appropriate level(s), or producing a rant, pitch slide deck or multi-media artwork.

For inspiration, watch one or more of the following videos about youth who have taken action on an issue of importance to them:

- Noah Irvine (Mental health): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDrEpcvCUEE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDrEpcvCUEE)
- Alex Deans (Technology for the visually impaired): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY-FpX4bZSs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY-FpX4bZSs)
- Levi Marshall (The Preservation Project): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7zfStwmMMg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7zfStwmMMg)
- Arezoo Najibzadeh (Representation of women in politics): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jlc-3gOXiXk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jlc-3gOXiXk)
- Denise Lee (Environmental sustainability): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT36epLUGDc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT36epLUGDc)

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Language Learners</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., elected representative, government, federal, provincial, territorial, local, First Nations, prime minister, premier, mayor, MP, MLA, councillor). Students can use a Frayer Model organizer to understand these terms.</li><li>• Share the lesson videos before class discussions and activities (“Levels of Government”).</li><li>• Ensure that subtitles are on during videos.</li><li>• Provide examples or photos for each area of responsibility.</li></ul> |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the demographic data of one or more elected bodies and discuss the need for more diversity in politics.</li><li>• Review the governance structure of a First Nations community you know about.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Accommodations</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs or Google Jamboard for collaborative activities and discussion. If students require further practice to consolidate understanding, assign a small group of students to create a review game such as Kahoot.</li></ul>   |



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Canada is a federal state, parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy.

A **federal state** brings together a number of different political communities with a central government (federal) for general purposes and separate local governments (provincial/territorial) for local purposes.

The division of powers is based on the idea that the level of government closest to the issue governs it. The distribution of responsibilities is found in Sections 91-95 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

The **federal government** takes responsibility for the whole country and matters of national concern, such as the armed forces, international relations and trade, currency, fisheries and oceans, criminal law and public safety.

**Provincial and territorial governments** are responsible for their own province or territory and issues such as education, health care delivery, social welfare, transportation and highways.

**Municipalities and regional districts**, collectively known as **local governments**, receive their powers from their respective provincial or territorial governments. These governments handle local matters, such as garbage and recycling, water and sewage, public transit, local parks and recreation.

Some **First Nations** communities have their own systems of governance. These councils or governments share certain responsibilities with the provincial/territorial or federal government. A variety of treaties, agreements, and legislation outline who is responsible for providing services and decision-making in Indigenous communities.

For some issues, the different levels of government have to work together and share the responsibility. For example, federal, provincial and municipal governments are concurrently responsible for the environment. The federal government enforces the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* and regulates waterways used for fishing and shipping. Provincial governments regulate land use, mining, manufacturing and harmful emissions. Local governments are responsible for zoning, garbage disposal, and sewage and water treatment.

Each level of government has elected officials to represent the people (constituents) living in their designated areas (e.g., electoral districts, municipalities at-large). **Elected representatives** are responsible for proposing, studying, debating and voting on bills (potential laws), and raising issues put forward by their constituents.

Representatives at the federal level are called **Members of Parliament** (MPs). Representatives at the provincial level in British Columbia are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

At the municipal level in British Columbia, elected representatives are called councillors. In unincorporated areas in British Columbia, elected representatives are called electoral area directors and they sit on the regional district board.

Most federal and provincial elected representatives belong to a political party, as well as some municipal officials in certain municipalities (e.g., Vancouver, Surrey, West Vancouver). A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals with a shared vision and political ideology whose intention is to achieve power and create meaningful political change.

The leader of the federal government is called the **prime minister**, whereas **premier** is the title given to the leader of the provincial government. At both

levels of government, the leader of the political party with the greatest number of elected representatives in the legislative body usually assumes the role of the leader of that government. Therefore, we do not vote for the position of premier or prime minister directly.

In British Columbia municipalities, the head of council is called a **mayor**. The head of council is elected at large, which means by all the people in the municipality. The head of regional district board is called a chair and they are selected among the members of the regional district board.

As a **constitutional monarchy**, Canada's head of state is a hereditary sovereign (queen or king) who reigns in accordance with the Constitution. The sovereign is represented in Canada by the **governor general**, who is appointed by the sovereign on the advice of the prime minister.

In each of the ten provinces, the sovereign is represented by a **lieutenant governor**, who is appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister. Usually, the governor general and lieutenant governors serve five-year terms. There is no sovereign representative at the municipal/local or territorial level.

In Canada's three territories, territorial commissioners serve a similar role to a lieutenant governor. Commissioners do not represent the sovereign, however. They are appointed by and represent the federal government.

# HANDOUT 4.1: Government Responsibilities

A list of some key federal, provincial/territorial and municipal/local government responsibilities based upon Canada's constitution.

| FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES  | PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES   | LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES  |
|--|--|--|
|  <b>Citizenship and passports</b>                 |  <b>Colleges and universities</b>         |  <b>Animal control</b>                        |
|  <b>Criminal law</b>                              |  <b>Drivers' licensing and highways</b>   |  <b>Fire protection</b>                       |
|  <b>Currency</b>                                  |  <b>Education</b>                         |  <b>Land use planning (zoning)</b>            |
|  <b>Federal taxes</b>                             |  <b>Hospitals and healthcare delivery</b> |  <b>Local parks</b>                           |
|  <b>Fisheries and oceans</b>                      |  <b>Municipalities</b>                    |  <b>Local police</b>                          |
|  <b>Foreign affairs and international trade</b> |  <b>Natural resources</b>               |  <b>Road maintenance</b>                    |
|  <b>First Nations lands and rights</b>          |  <b>Property and civil rights</b>       |  <b>Recreation and community facilities</b> |
|  <b>National defence</b>                        |  <b>Provincial law and courts</b>       |  <b>Public transportation</b>               |
|  <b>Official languages</b>                      |  <b>Provincial taxes</b>                |  <b>Waste management</b>                    |
|  <b>Postal service</b>                          |  <b>Social services</b>                 |  <b>Water supply and treatment</b>          |
|  <b>Veterans affairs</b>                        |  |  |

**Some shared areas of responsibility include:** Immigration, agriculture, healthcare, transportation and environment.



## ACTIVITY 4.2: Reflection

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Which level of government has the most impact in my life, and why? Explain with two examples.</b></p> |  |
|---|--|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Is it important to know which level of government is responsible for what? Explain.</b></p> |  |
|---|--|

# Lesson 5

## Municipalities and Regional Districts



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How do local governments influence their communities?
- 2 What actions can be taken to improve my community?
- 3 Why should I care about my community?

### OVERVIEW

Municipalities and regional districts provide essential local services and are responsible for the planning, growth and well-being of their community through the adoption of by-laws and policies.

In this lesson, students begin with an evaluation of their community and exchange of perspectives. After learning about local governments in British Columbia, students complete an online scavenger hunt to learn about their municipality or regional district. Next, students work in groups to develop a detailed action plan to improve an issue in their community or analyze a recent by-law. In the Consolidation activity, students reflect on why they should care about their community and work with others to create positive change.

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- evaluate their community's strengths and weaknesses;
- understand the structure and function of local governments in British Columbia;
- identify key information about their own municipality or regional district;
- analyze different actions that could be taken to address an issue in their community; and,
- evaluate the importance of being an active and engaged community member.

## Starter

1. Ask students to evaluate their community by responding to the statements on Activity 5.1. Alternatively, the data could be collected through an online survey. A template in Google Form and MS Forms has been provided on the project website.

### TEACHER NOTE

Consider having both students and their families fill out the online survey in order to analyze findings from the wider community.

2. Divide students into small groups and have them discuss their community's strengths and weaknesses and the reasons behind their choices.
3. Analyze the community evaluation scores as a whole class. Questions to prompt discussion:
  - What was the overall evaluation of our community?
  - Was there consensus about our community's main strengths and weaknesses? Why or why not?
  - How did your discussion with classmates influence your views about the community? (Sample prompt: "I liked hearing \_\_\_\_'s perspective about why \_\_\_\_\_. It was something that I didn't know about or haven't considered before.)

## Activities

1. Use Slide Deck 5 to review basic information about local governments in British Columbia.

Key questions:

- What are the features and responsibilities of municipalities and regional districts?
  - How do municipal councils and regional district boards function?
  - How do municipalities and regional districts influence their communities?
2. Ask students to complete an online scavenger hunt about their municipality or regional district (Activity 5.2). Give students time to complete it independently or in pairs and then share their responses in small groups, allowing students to add to or update their own activity sheet.
    - Year of incorporation
    - Population and census data (Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2021)
    - Geographic boundaries and two major landforms or waterways within it

- Composition of the municipal council or regional district board (numbers of positions and titles)
  - Description of four services provided to the community
  - Summary of three recent announcements or new programs offered and who is impacted in the community
  - Additional: Photo evidence of neighbourhood attractions, cultural institutions and activities (four pieces)
3. Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them discuss their views about the most important needs and opportunities in their community. Students should reflect on the findings in the *Starter* activity and from their research about their municipality or regional district.

Questions to prompt student thinking:

- What do you think are the most pressing needs in our community?
  - Do you see any opportunities for improvement or innovation?
  - How could the health of our community be improved?
4. Ask each group to reach a consensus about one issue they want to address through a detailed community action plan. Using Activity 5.3 as a guide, each group should conduct research, design their plan and analyze the possible outcomes. Students should use primary and secondary resources, such as the local government's website, research studies and media sources.
  5. Allow each group to present its plan to the rest of the class.

## Consolidation

Through a closing class discussion, have students respond to one or more of the following questions:

- Why should we care about our community?
- Why is it important to collaborate with others on addressing community needs?
- Why is it important to have diversity in government and within groups tackling change in our communities?

## Alternative Activity

1. By-laws are the primary legislative instrument of local governments. Municipal councils and regional district boards make decisions by adopting or amending recommendations from its committees and local government officials contained in reports and communications. Ask students to research a recent by-law passed by their municipal council and complete Activity 5.4. Exemplar 5.5 can be used as a guide.

Key questions:

- **Details:** What are the details of the by-law?
  - **Conditions:** What are the underlying conditions?
  - **Objectives:** What are the goals and objectives?
  - **Results:** How can progress be evaluated?
  - **Analysis:** Do you think the by-law will be effective? Why or why not?
2. In small groups or through a whole class discussion, have students share their by-law research and analysis.

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Language Learners</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.</li> <li>• Allow students to explore home communities as well as the community in which they now live.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students may have different feelings towards their community. Encourage empathy and foster a safe place for respectful discussion.</li> <li>• Depending on the community, students could choose to focus on a particular ethnic or religious group and see how they fit into the larger community.</li> <li>• Focus research on programs and services for youth or relevant other groups in the community.</li> <li>• If applicable, encourage students to explore nearby First Nations communities, and their changes over time, or how these communities fit into the larger community.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Accommodations</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative activities and discussion.</li> <li>• The community action plan presentation can be created and shared in an entirely digital format, using PowerPoint or Google Slides.</li> </ul>   |

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

**Municipalities** and **regional districts** provide British Columbians with essential local services, such as clean water, sewage systems, parks and recreation, and fire protection. These local governments are responsible for the planning, growth and well-being of their community through legislation, by-laws and policies.

There are 162 **municipalities** in British Columbia, covering approximately 89 per cent of the province's population. Municipalities range in population size, from small villages of 100 people to large cities with more than 600,000 people. Based on population and geographic area, there are four classes of municipalities: **villages, towns, districts** and **cities**.

The purposes of a municipality include:

- Providing for good government of its community;
- Providing for services, laws and other matters for community benefit;
- Providing for stewardship of the public assets of its community; and
- Fostering the economic, social and environmental well-being of its community.

Municipalities have the authority to establish a wide range of services under the Community Charter and other provincial legislation. Most of the time whether or not to provide a particular service is the municipal council's choice.

Property taxes are established by each municipality and may vary, based on the type of property owned. Each year, municipalities determine how much money they need to collect from property taxes to contribute to the cost of services, and determine the tax rate based on that amount.

The local government system in British Columbia is unique in Canada. In addition to municipalities, it is composed of 27 **regional districts**, covering almost the entire province. Regional districts range in population from under 4,000 to over two million people.

Regional districts were created to support cooperation and equitable cost-sharing between municipal areas and rural areas. Regional districts are modeled as a federation composed of municipalities, unincorporated areas (electoral areas), and in some cases, Treaty First Nations, each of which have representation on the regional district board.

Like municipalities, regional districts have a similar purpose and the broad authority to operate any service that the board of directors considers necessary or desirable for all or part of the regional district. Some of the more common services provided by regional districts include: water supply, sewers, fire protection, parks and recreation, solid waste management, economic development, animal control, public housing, libraries, emergency services and airports.

**Municipal councils** are the democratically elected bodies to make decisions on behalf of the municipality, and are accountable for those decisions to their community. They are comprised of a head of council called a **mayor** and several **councillors**, collectively called **council members**.

Council size varies from 5 to 11 members depending on the population. A municipal council makes decisions collectively, meaning that it is not individual council members but rather the council as a whole, based on a majority vote, that decides and acts for the municipality.

Municipal councils appoint one or more members of their elected councils to sit as representatives on their respective regional board (**regional district directors**). In unincorporated areas, **electoral area directors** are elected directly by the people. The representatives of Treaty First Nations are selected from their own governing body, also called regional district directors.

The head of a regional district board of directors is called the **chair**. The chair is chosen by a vote of the members of the regional district board of directors. Collectively, the regional district board is the governing body of the regional district. It has authority to make decisions through resolutions and by-laws, consistent with the purposes of the regional district.

## REGIONAL DISTRICTS

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberni-Clayoquot</li> <li>• Bulkley-Nechako</li> <li>• Capital</li> <li>• Cariboo</li> <li>• Central Coast</li> <li>• Central Kootenay</li> <li>• Central Okanagan</li> <li>• Columbia Shuswap</li> <li>• Comox Valley</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cowichan Valley</li> <li>• East Kootenay</li> <li>• Fraser Valley</li> <li>• Fraser-Fort George</li> <li>• Kitimat-Stikine</li> <li>• Kootenay Boundary</li> <li>• Metro Vancouver</li> <li>• Mount Waddington</li> <li>• Nanaimo</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Coast</li> <li>• North Okanagan</li> <li>• Okanagan-Similkameen</li> <li>• Peace River</li> <li>• qathet Regional District</li> <li>• Squamish-Lillooet</li> <li>• Strathcona</li> <li>• Sunshine Coast</li> <li>• Thompson-Nicola</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|

## MUNICIPALITIES

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbotsford</li> <li>• Armstrong</li> <li>• Burnaby</li> <li>• Campbell River</li> <li>• Castlegar</li> <li>• Chilliwack</li> <li>• Colwood</li> <li>• Coquitlam</li> <li>• Courtenay</li> <li>• Cranbrook</li> <li>• Dawson Creek</li> <li>• Delta</li> <li>• Duncan</li> <li>• Enderby</li> <li>• Fernie</li> <li>• Fort St. John</li> <li>• Grand Forks</li> <li>• Greenwood</li> <li>• Kamloops</li> <li>• Kelowna</li> <li>• Kimberley</li> <li>• Langford</li> <li>• Langley</li> <li>• Maple Ridge</li> <li>• Merritt</li> <li>• Mission</li> <li>• Nanaimo</li> <li>• Nelson</li> <li>• New Westminster</li> <li>• North Vancouver</li> <li>• Parksville</li> <li>• Penticton</li> <li>• Pitt Meadows</li> <li>• Port Alberni</li> <li>• Port Coquitlam</li> <li>• Port Moody</li> <li>• Powell River</li> <li>• Prince George</li> <li>• Prince Rupert</li> <li>• Quesnel</li> <li>• Revelstoke</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Richmond</li> <li>• Rossland</li> <li>• Salmon Arm</li> <li>• Surrey</li> <li>• Terrace</li> <li>• Trail</li> <li>• Vancouver</li> <li>• Vernon</li> <li>• Victoria</li> <li>• White Rock</li> <li>• Williams Lake</li> <li>• 100 Mile House</li> <li>• Barriere</li> <li>• Central Saanich</li> <li>• Chetwynd</li> <li>• Clearwater</li> <li>• Coldstream</li> <li>• Elkford</li> <li>• Fort St. James</li> <li>• Highlands</li> <li>• Hope</li> <li>• Houston</li> <li>• Hudson's Hope</li> <li>• Invermere</li> <li>• Kent</li> <li>• Kitimat</li> <li>• Lake Country</li> <li>• Lantzville</li> <li>• Lillooet</li> <li>• Logan Lake</li> <li>• Mackenzie</li> <li>• Metchosin</li> <li>• New Hazelton</li> <li>• North Cowichan</li> <li>• North Saanich</li> <li>• North Vancouver</li> <li>• Oak Bay</li> <li>• Peachland</li> <li>• Port Edward</li> <li>• Port Hardy</li> <li>• Saanich</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sechelt</li> <li>• Sechelt Indian Government</li> <li>• District</li> <li>• Sicamous</li> <li>• Sooke</li> <li>• Sparwood</li> <li>• Squamish</li> <li>• Stewart</li> <li>• Summerland</li> <li>• Taylor</li> <li>• Tofino</li> <li>• Tumbler Ridge</li> <li>• Ucluelet</li> <li>• Vanderhoof</li> <li>• Wells</li> <li>• West Kelowna</li> <li>• West Vancouver</li> <li>• Bowen Island</li> <li>• Sun Peaks</li> <li>• Northern Rockies</li> <li>• Whistler</li> <li>• Comox</li> <li>• Creston</li> <li>• Gibsons</li> <li>• Golden</li> <li>• Ladysmith</li> <li>• Lake Cowichan</li> <li>• Oliver</li> <li>• Osoyoos</li> <li>• Port McNeill</li> <li>• Princeton</li> <li>• Qualicum Beach</li> <li>• Sidney</li> <li>• Smithers</li> <li>• View Royal</li> <li>• Esquimalt</li> <li>• Langley</li> <li>• Spallumcheen</li> <li>• Lumby</li> <li>• Alert Bay</li> <li>• Anmore</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ashcroft</li> <li>• Belcarra</li> <li>• Burns Lake</li> <li>• Cache Creek</li> <li>• Canal Flats</li> <li>• Chase</li> <li>• Clinton</li> <li>• Cumberland</li> <li>• Fraser Lake</li> <li>• Fruitvale</li> <li>• Gold River</li> <li>• Granisle</li> <li>• Harrison Hot Springs</li> <li>• Hazelton</li> <li>• Kaslo</li> <li>• Keremeos</li> <li>• Lions Bay</li> <li>• Lytton</li> <li>• Masset</li> <li>• McBride</li> <li>• Midway</li> <li>• Montrose</li> <li>• Nakusp</li> <li>• New Denver</li> <li>• Pemberton</li> <li>• Port Alice</li> <li>• Port Clements</li> <li>• Pouce Coupe</li> <li>• Queen Charlotte</li> <li>• Radium Hot Springs</li> <li>• Salmo</li> <li>• Sayward</li> <li>• Silverton</li> <li>• Slocan</li> <li>• Tahsis</li> <li>• Telkwa</li> <li>• Valemount</li> <li>• Warfield</li> <li>• Zeballos</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|---|

## ACTIVITY 5.1: Evaluating My Community

Use the following score card to evaluate your community's strengths and weaknesses. Indicate if you 'Strongly Agree', 'Somewhat Agree', 'Somewhat Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' with each statement by putting a checkmark under the appropriate response.

| CATEGORY   | STRONGLY AGREE | SOMEWHAT AGREE | SOMEWHAT DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| I feel a strong sense of belonging in our community.   |                |                |                   |                   |
| I feel that our community is safe.   |                |                |                   |                   |
| We have plenty of parks and green spaces and they are well kept.   |                |                |                   |                   |
| Our community has enough recreation facilities and recreation programs.  |                |                |                   |                   |
| Access to community programs and services is not a problem.  |                |                |                   |                   |
| Our community has increased alternative methods of transportation, including public transit, carpooling or bike lanes. |                |                |                   |                   |
| Poverty and food security (availability and access to nutritious food) is not a problem in our community.              |                |                |                   |                   |
| Our community does a good job celebrating its history and culture through festivals, museums and galleries.            |                |                |                   |                   |
| Internet connections are fast and reliable in our community.   |                |                |                   |                   |
| Our local government has an effective tourism campaign, which helps attract many visitors.                             |                |                |                   |                   |
| Affordable housing is not a problem in our community.  |                |                |                   |                   |
| I am confident I will find a job that interests me in our community.   |                |                |                   |                   |
| I am planning to stay to live and work in our community after school.  |                |                |                   |                   |
| I have a great deal of trust in our police.  |                |                |                   |                   |
| I have a great deal of trust in our local government politicians.  |                |                |                   |                   |

Calculate your community's score by calculating the totals for each response below.

**Strongly Agree** Number of responses \_\_\_\_\_ x 4 \_\_\_\_\_

**Somewhat Agree** Number of responses \_\_\_\_\_ x 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Somewhat Disagree** Number of responses \_\_\_\_\_ x 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Strongly Disagree** Number of responses \_\_\_\_\_ x 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Your community evaluation score (out of 60): \_\_\_\_\_

**Question:** What are your local government's main **strengths** and **weaknesses**? Identify three of each.

## ACTIVITY 5.2: Learning About My Community

Complete a scavenger hunt to learn more about your municipality or regional district. Use your local government's website, Statistics Canada's website, or other information sources.

| Name   | Year of incorporation |
|--|-----------------------|
| Detail the population and census data (Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2021)                                      |                       |
| Identify the geographic boundaries and <b>two major landforms or waterways</b> within it.                            |                       |
| Outline the <b>composition of the municipal council or regional district board</b> (titles and number of positions). |                       |
| Describe <b>four services</b> provided to the community.   |                       |
| Summarize <b>three recent announcements</b> or new programs offered and identify who is impacted in the community.   |                       |

**Additional:** Photo evidence of neighbourhood attractions, cultural institutions and activities (four pieces)



## ACTIVITY 5.3: Community Action Plan

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>IDENTIFY AN ISSUE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the most pressing need in your community?</li><li>• Does an opportunity exist to create positive change in your community?</li><li>• Can you frame the need or opportunity as a question?</li></ul>  |  |
| <p><b>FIND THE FACTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the issues related to the need/ opportunity?</li><li>• Who is affected and how?</li><li>• What research or statistics is available?</li><li>• What steps has your local government taken to address the issue?</li></ul>                           |  |
| <p><b>PROPOSED ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What actions can be taken to address the issue?</li><li>• What individuals are in a position to create or block change? (government officials, community groups)</li><li>• In which ways can we advocate for action or change in the community?</li></ul> |  |
| <p><b>OUTCOMES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the intended outcomes of the actions?</li><li>• What are some possible unintended consequences?</li><li>• How can we evaluate the success of our plan or proposed actions?</li></ul>   |  |

## ACTIVITY 5.4: By-law Analysis

By-laws are the primary legislative instrument of local governments. Municipal councils and regional district boards make decisions by adopting or amending recommendations from its committees and local government officials. Visit your local government's website and find a recent by-law. Analyze the by-law by responding to the questions below.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>BY-LAW INFORMATION:</b><br>Number, subject, date                            |  |
| <b>DETAILS:</b><br>What are the details of the by-law?                         |  |
| <b>CONDITIONS:</b><br>What are the underlying conditions?                      |  |
| <b>OBJECTIVES:</b><br>What are the goals and objectives?                       |  |
| <b>RESULTS:</b><br>How can progress or changes in behaviour be evaluated?      |  |
| <b>ANALYSIS:</b><br>Do you think the by-law will be effective? Why or why not? |  |

## EXEMPLAR 5.5: By-law Analysis

Sample by-law analysis.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>BY-LAW INFORMATION:</b><br/>Number, subject, date</p>                            | <p>#1234<br/>To provide new regulations for the care and control of dangerous dogs to protect the public. Enacted January 31, 2022.</p>   |
| <p><b>DETAILS:</b><br/>What are the details of the by-law?</p>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No person shall allow an animal to remain outdoors during extreme weather unless the animal has access to an enclosure that will adequately protect the animal from the elements.</li> <li>• No person shall keep an animal tethered where a choke collar, choke chain, pronged collar or any similar device forms part of the tether.</li> <li>• No person shall tether an animal unsupervised for longer than one hour.</li> <li>• No person shall use a choke collar, choke chain, pronged collar or any similar device at any time on a dog. Does not apply to the use of a martingale collar on a dog.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>CONDITIONS:</b><br/>What are the underlying conditions?</p>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfair treatment of animals, including exposure to extreme weather and tethering for an extended period of time and use of harmful collars.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>OBJECTIVES:</b><br/>What are the goals and objectives?</p>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the frequency of animals being left outside during extreme weather conditions and resulting ailments.</li> <li>• Reduce animal injuries and abuse due to harmful collars and neglect.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>RESULTS:</b><br/>How can progress or changes in behaviour be evaluated?</p>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring the number of injuries or fatalities of animals due to extreme conditions or tethering.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>ANALYSIS:</b><br/>Do you think the by-law will be effective? Why or why not?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes. It will be effective if the by-law is enforced and citizens are aware of it.</li> </ul>   |

# Lesson 6

## Local Elections



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How is my municipal council or electoral area director elected?
- 2 How can I learn about the election candidates?
- 3 Which candidate(s) do I support and why?

### OVERVIEW

Elections present an opportunity for citizens to discuss political issues and shape the future direction of their community.

In this lesson, students become acquainted with the local election process and analyze ways to compare the candidates. In groups, students collect information about or from one of the candidates, and share their findings with the rest of the class. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on the reasons behind their candidate preferences.

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- analyze issues facing their community;
- explain details about the local election process;
- analyze different ways to compare the candidates;
- research the candidates running for election using primary and secondary resources;
- evaluate which criteria is important to them when comparing the candidates and/or which candidate(s) they support and why.

## Starter

1. Share the following with students to frame the lesson.

*In any given place – a neighbourhood, community, province or country – anywhere that groups of people live together and where the laws and decisions affect everyone, there will be differences in opinions about how government and society should work, which issues are most important and how best to take action. Elections present an opportunity for citizens to discuss political issues and shape the future direction of their community.*

2. In small groups, have students brainstorm some of the most pressing issues in your community. Aim for 6 to 8 issues.
3. As a class, co-create criteria to evaluate the list of community issues.

Sample criteria: Ask students to respond to the following questions for each issue – Definitely / Probably / Probably not / Definitely not

- Is the impact long lasting?
  - Is the impact extreme – positively or negatively?
  - Are many people affected?
  - Does it directly affect you, your family and friends?
  - Are many people for and/or against it?
  - Are the differences between supporters and opponents substantial?
4. Return to small groups and have students rank the issues using the criteria established.
  5. Follow up with a class discussion to review the small group rankings and as a class come to a consensus on the top three issues facing your community.

## Activities

1. Review the local election process in British Columbia using the following guiding questions and Slide Deck 6. Add specific information about the election races in your community to the Slide Deck in advance.

- Why do we have elections?
- Who is responsible for organizing local elections?
- How are candidates elected in local elections?
- How many candidates can I vote for in each race?

2. On a blackboard or whiteboard, write down the following question: How do voters decide who to vote for?

Through a discussion, generate questions to frame this decision. Start with pairs or small groups and then move to a whole class discussion.

Sample criteria for evaluating candidates:

- Why does the candidate want to be elected?
  - Who would make a good leader for the community?
  - Who would work well with the rest of council or regional district board to make decisions for our community?
  - What experience does the candidate have in serving the community?
  - Which candidates share the same concerns as me? Do they have ideas to address these issues?
  - What ideas or proposals do the candidates have for our municipality / community? Which candidate's ideas do I support the most?
3. Find out which candidates are running for election in your municipality or electoral area. Show students where they can find this information by visiting your local government's website.

### TEACHER NOTE

If your municipality has political parties/election slates, explain the concept to students. You may also want to consider focusing research on the parties and/or mayoral candidates, rather than all the council candidates, to reduce the amount of work that follows.

4. Divide the class into pairs or small groups to research the candidates running for election. As a class, develop a checklist for creating a candidate profile. Have students also choose how the information will be presented (e.g., poster, slide deck, video, mock social media profile).

Sample candidate profile:

- Name and photo
- Personal information (What skills or experience do they have for the job?)
- Reason for running (Why do they want the job?)
- Priorities (What issues are most important to the candidate?)
- Issues (What is their position or proposed ideas for three election issues?)

### TEACHER NOTE

Encourage students to use primary and secondary resources, including news articles and commentary, candidate websites and social media, or even contact the candidates directly.

5. Have each group present their candidate profile to the rest of the class. Ask students to take notes using Activity 6.1. Alternatively, you can post the group work on a digital platform and allow students to review each profile on their own.

## Consolidation

Have a brief closing discussion about evaluating the candidates, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions.

- What criteria is most important to you when evaluating the candidates and why?
- Which candidate do you prefer and why?
- Which candidate do you think will best address the issues that matter most to you? Explain your reasoning.

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Language Learners</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyze the diversity of the candidates running in your community and discuss the need for diversity in politics.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Local government in Metro Vancouver is 90% white – but it doesn't have to stay that way: <a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/metro-vancouver-diversity-solutions-2020-1.5620528">https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/metro-vancouver-diversity-solutions-2020-1.5620528</a></li><li>- Women in Politics: <a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/women-politics/">https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/women-politics/</a></li><li>- Refugees in Politics: <a href="https://www.vicnews.com/news/canada-declares-victoria-councillor-a-noteworthy-historical-figure/">https://www.vicnews.com/news/canada-declares-victoria-councillor-a-noteworthy-historical-figure/</a></li></ul></li></ul> |
| <b>Accommodations</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative activities and discussion.</li><li>• Consider using a digital format for the candidate research and profile so that it can be shared online, in order to limit interactions or movement in the classroom.</li></ul>   |

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

General local elections in British Columbia are held every four years on the third Saturday in October. The next general local elections will be held on Saturday, October 15, 2022. British Columbians will elect their municipal council members, or if they live in an unincorporated area, they will elect their electoral area director, as well as other positions such as Park Board representatives and Island Trust trustees. (The Islands Trust is a federated body responsible for protecting the unique nature and amenities of 13 major islands and more than 450 smaller islands and the surrounding waters in the southern Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound.)

An individual who seeks public office or competes for the job of elected representative is called a **candidate**. It is their job to share their goals, ideas and commitment to the job in order to win the support of voters during a campaign.

In some of the larger municipalities in the province, such as Vancouver,

Surrey and Richmond, candidates may belong to a political party or election slate. A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals with a shared vision and similar political beliefs whose intention is to achieve power through an election and create meaningful political change. An **election slate** is a group of candidates that run in multi-seat elections on a common platform.

British Columbia municipalities use a system called **First-Past-The-Post** (FPTP). A successful candidate must receive the most votes in order to be elected. In a mayoral race, only a single candidate wins because there is only one position. Whereas, in a multi-member race, where five councillors are elected **at large**, it is the five candidates with the most votes that win a seat on council.

Across all municipalities, there may be ten or more candidates running for a position on council, depending on the race.

Conversely, a candidate is elected by **acclamation** if they have no opponents, or if the number of candidates match the number of council members to be elected. In that case, no vote is held for that race.

To become a candidate in a local government election in British Columbia, you must be 18 years of age or older on general voting day; be a Canadian citizen, have been a resident of British Columbia for at least six months prior to filing nomination documents; and, not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act* or any other enactment from being nominated for, being elected to or holding office, or be otherwise disqualified by law.

There are many ways to gather information about the election candidates. Community groups hold town hall meetings or all-candidate debates where citizens are invited to listen to candidates speak on the issues and ask them questions. Information can also be found on radio and television, media websites or in newspapers and local magazines. Individuals may also visit campaign offices, attend campaign events or have a chance to talk to candidates when they visit homes during door to door canvassing. Information may also be accessible online through candidate websites and social media pages.

## ACTIVITY 6.1: Graphic Organizer – Getting to Know the Candidates

Fill out the graphic organizer below with information about the candidates running for election.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>NAME</b>                             |  |
| <b>PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>             |  |
| <b>REASON FOR RUNNING</b>               |  |
| <b>PRIORITIES IF ELECTED</b>            |  |
| <b>IDEAS OR PROPOSALS ON KEY ISSUES</b> |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>NAME</b>                             |  |
| <b>PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>             |  |
| <b>REASON FOR RUNNING</b>               |  |
| <b>PRIORITIES IF ELECTED</b>            |  |
| <b>IDEAS OR PROPOSALS ON KEY ISSUES</b> |  |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>NAME</b>                             |  |
| <b>PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>             |  |
| <b>REASON FOR RUNNING</b>               |  |
| <b>PRIORITIES IF ELECTED</b>            |  |
| <b>IDEAS OR PROPOSALS ON KEY ISSUES</b> |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>NAME</b>                             |  |
| <b>PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>             |  |
| <b>REASON FOR RUNNING</b>               |  |
| <b>PRIORITIES IF ELECTED</b>            |  |
| <b>IDEAS OR PROPOSALS ON KEY ISSUES</b> |  |

# Lesson 7

## School Trustees



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the opportunities and challenges in making collective decisions?**
- 2 What is the role of school trustees?**
- 3 How can I learn about and evaluate the school trustee candidates?**

### OVERVIEW

British Columbians elect their school trustees to improve student achievement according to the diverse needs, priorities and unique educational requirements of the communities they represent.

In this lesson, students explore collective decision-making while discussing ways to improve students' mental health and well-being. Students review the role of school trustees and research the composition of their board of education. In groups, students create a profile for an ideal school trustee, before researching the candidates running for election. In the *Consolidation* activity, students evaluate the trustee candidates using evidence or analysis based on their ideal trustee.

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- work collaboratively with their peers to discuss solutions to a problem;
- explain the role of school districts and school trustees;
- research and present information about the trustee candidates; and,
- evaluate the candidates running for election.

## Starter

1. Introduce the idea that a school district manages the public schools in their municipality, or within several communities in their region. Ask students if they know the name of their school district.
2. Use an adapted 'Focusing Four' protocol to discuss ideas for the following scenario.

*The health and well-being of students has worsened over the last few years and is having a negative effect on student achievement. The provincial government has agreed to provide additional money to school districts to address the situation. The school districts must decide how they will spend the money in their schools in order to support the health and well-being of students in their community.*

Divide students into groups of five or six and follow the steps below. One student should take on the role of facilitator in each group.

- a) **Brainstorm:** Have each group brainstorm ideas on chart paper. There should be no debate or critique during this stage.
  - b) **Clarify:** Invite group members to ask questions about any of the ideas. The student who put forth the idea should clarify their thinking as needed.
  - c) **Advocate:** Ask students to express which ideas they support and why. Statements should be positive in nature. Students can advocate for as many ideas as they like.
  - d) **Canvass:** Have students vote with a show of hands which idea they like best. The goal is to come to a consensus on one final idea.
3. Have each group share their agreed upon idea with the rest of the class and debrief on the activity.
    - What are the opportunities and challenges in making collective decisions?
    - How can you try to persuade others to agree with your ideas?
    - Why is it important to be respectful and keep an open mind when listening to others' opinions?

## Activities

1. Review key information about school districts and the role of school trustees using Slide Deck 7.

2. Investigate the composition of your school district.
  - How many school trustees are elected to the board?
  - Does the district have trustee electoral areas? If so, how many?
  - If applicable, which electoral area does our school reside in? How many school trustees are elected in our electoral area?
3. In small groups, ask students to create a profile for their 'ideal' school trustee using Handout 7.1 and Activity 7.2. What personal characteristics, skills, experience and motivations align with the responsibilities of the role?
4. Review the list of candidates running for school trustee in your community or electoral area by visiting the website for your school district and/or municipality.

### TEACHER NOTE

If your school trustee candidates are acclaimed, skip to the *Alternative Activities*.

5. Ask students to learn about the candidates through online searches, candidate websites and social media pages. This activity can be completed through a jigsaw method or you can assign one or two candidates to each group and have them present to the rest of the class.

## Consolidation

Have a closing discussion about the candidates and ask students write a reflection about their evaluation of the candidates.

- Which candidate(s) do you think would make the best school trustee and why?
- Which candidate(s) most closely matches your ideal candidate? Explain with evidence or examples.
- What advice would you give to a family member about researching trustee candidates?

## Alternative Activities

- A. Ask students to reflect on what they would like to change or improve about their school experience and find a way to articulate this proposal to their newly elected board of education. This can be in the form of a letter, video, slide deck or multi-media piece.
- B. If your school trustee or board was acclaimed, invite them into your class for a discussion about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead within the school district.

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Language Learners</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.</li> <li>• Encourage students to compare the education system in British Columbia to the one of their home country. This can help with a deeper understanding of the institutions.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the emphasis many Indigenous groups place on consensus decision-making.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Accommodations</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative activities and discussion.</li> </ul>  |

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

British Columbia's **school districts** operate the province's publicly funded schools and administer the funding they receive from the provincial government.

The province is divided into 60 school districts and each district represents a designated geographic area or, in the case of francophone education, the province as a whole.

Each school district has a group of locally elected representatives known as **school trustees** who are the members of the **board of education** (also known as the **school board**). British Columbians elect their boards of education to improve student achievement according to the diverse needs, priorities and unique educational requirements of the communities they represent.

As a locally elected representative, the trustee's role is to maintain a focus on student achievement and well-being, and to participate in making decisions that benefit the entire district while representing the interests of their local area. School trustees listen to their constituents, guide the work of their school district and set plans, policies and the annual budget. Reflecting the strength of local representation, boards report back to their communities on how students are doing. Boards are directly accountable to the people they serve.

The board of education is responsible for operating their respective school district based on the educational goals of their local communities and in accordance with the general direction established by the provincial government. The respective responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and boards of education are described in the *School Act* and these include:

- Attending meetings;
- Setting local policy for the effective and efficient operation of schools;
- Employing the staff necessary for school district operations;
- Establishing conditions of employment for employees;
- Preparing and approving the school district's operating budgets and capital plans; and
- Hearing appeals from parents and students where a staff decision significantly affects the education, health or safety of the student.

A school trustee is a member of a team. Under the *School Act*, the trustee's power lies in membership on the board of education. This means that the board has the authority to make decisions or to take action; individual trustees in and of themselves do not have this authority.

School trustees are elected every four years during local elections. Each school district is composed of one or more **electoral areas** from which trustees are elected.

The composition of the boards (number of trustees, trustee electoral areas, number of trustees elected from each trustee electoral area) varies to reflect the communities and the population of each school district in the province.

In some school districts, all trustees are elected at large. This means that there is only one electoral area (the entire school district) from which all trustees are elected. In other school districts, there are multiple electoral areas.

There may be more than one trustee elected from each electoral area. Some electoral areas may be composed of: one or more municipalities; a combination of municipalities and rural areas, or rural areas only.

Local governments and boards of education may cooperate on the running of elections. Some trustee elections may be conducted by a municipality or regional district.

Therefore, information will be available and nominations filed in the local government office instead of, or as well as, the school district office.

Following the election, the trustees elect one of their members to act as **chair** of the board.

**Independent schools** have their own Independent School Authorities and are not under the jurisdiction of public school boards.

## HANDOUT 7.1: The Role of School Trustees

A trustee's role is to maintain a focus on student achievement and well-being, and to participate in making decisions that benefit the entire district while representing the interests of their community.



### **TRUSTEES ESTABLISH THE DISTRICT'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

The board is responsible for setting the overall direction for the school district. Trustees work together to establish the board's strategic plan, which sets the direction of the district for parents, the public and the superintendent, and lays out the priorities and strategic direction of the school district.

The board ensures that the superintendent carries out responsibilities for implementing the board's strategic plan. The superintendent holds the responsibility for the day-to-day work in this area or the delegation of the work to various people and groups within the organization.



### **TRUSTEES ARE FINANCIAL STEWARDS**

School trustees have important responsibilities for approval and oversight of school district financial decisions. One of the most important aspects of governance for trustees is to connect district goals, strategic planning and economic realities, through the establishment of the school district's annual budget.

The board oversees development of a strategic plan and the allocation of resources to support that plan. The board ensures the budget and staff allocations are in alignment with the plan and the identified goals that are intended to improve outcomes for students.



### **TRUSTEES ARE A PART OF A TEAM**

A trustee is a member of a team: the board of education. While the board has the authority to make decisions or to take action; individual trustees in and of themselves do not have this authority.

While healthy debate is an important aspect of good governance, once the board has voted, it is the board's decision and an individual trustee's responsibility to act in a manner that promotes and upholds the board's decision and to communicate the board's decision back to the public.



### **TRUSTEES ARE COMMUNITY LEADERS**

Trustees work with their board colleagues and with other community partners to ensure that all the students within the board's jurisdiction have equal opportunities to reach their maximum potential.

While members of the board act as representatives of their community, their primary job is to participate in policy making and strategic planning that are in the interests of all of the district's students, and are grounded in promoting student achievement and well-being. Trustees balance the governance role with the representative role, participating in decision-making that benefits the whole board while representing the interests of their community.



### **BOARDS ARE EMPLOYERS**

As employers of all school district staff, boards have a legal responsibility for employee relations with their management, teaching and support staff. For unionized staff, the terms and conditions of the relationship are established through legislation, board policy, and decisions made through the collective bargaining process and in collective agreements.

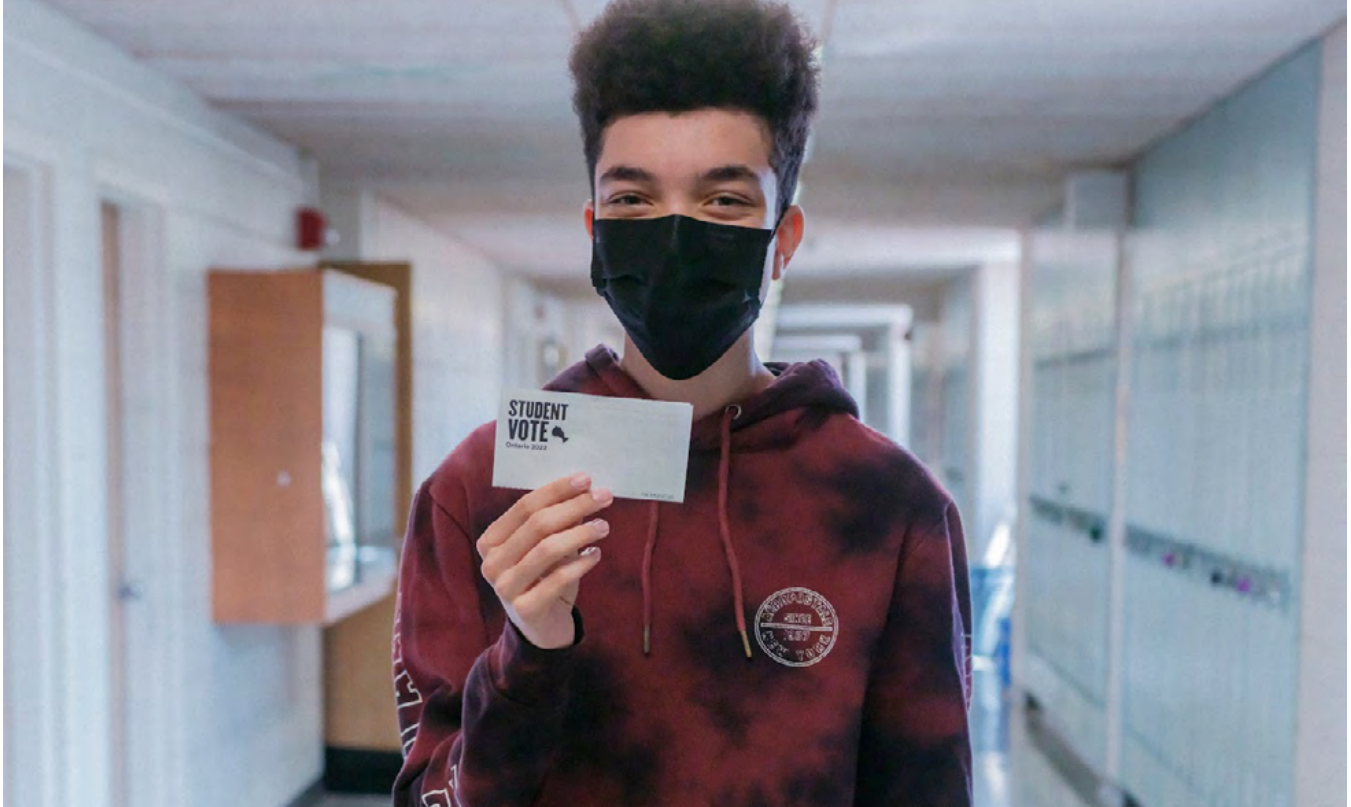
## ACTIVITY 7.2: My Ideal School Trustee

In the chart below, describe five key responsibilities of the role of a school trustee in the left hand column. In the right hand column, record what characteristics, skills or qualities would be needed to perform each responsibility.

| <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> | <b>CHARACTERISTICS, SKILLS OR QUALITIES NEEDED</b> |
|-----------------------|--|
|                       |  |
|                       |  |
|                       |  |
|                       |  |
|                       |  |

# Lesson 8

## The Voting Process



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

**1 Is voting important?**

**2 How do I vote in local elections?**

**3 What are some barriers to participating in the voting process?**

### OVERVIEW

The right to vote comes with the responsibility to vote in an informed and purposeful manner.

In this lesson, students analyze different reasons for voting in elections. Students review essential information about voter eligibility and when, where and how people vote in local elections. Afterwards, students learn about voter turnout and barriers to electoral participation, and reflect on whether any barriers may be relevant to them in the future. In the *Consolidation* activity, students create a social media style video about whether they believe citizens should vote or whether they plan to vote in the future.

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- evaluate the importance of voting in elections;
- explain key information related to voting in local elections;
- analyze barriers to voting in elections; and,
- articulate reasons for voting in a persuasive manner.

## Starter

Save the last word

1. Distribute one index card or paper to each student. Introduce the activity by posing the following question: *Does voting matter?*
2. Watch the “Why Voting Matters” video and ask students to select one quote or reason for voting that stood out to them. They should write down the quote or reason on the index card. You may want to play the video twice in order to support this selection.
3. Ask students to explain why they chose the reason they did from the video by writing an explanation on the back of the card (e.g., what it meant to them, reminded them of, how it connects to prior learning).
4. Divide students into groups of three. Invite one student to read their chosen reason to rest of their group. Then ask the other two students to discuss the reason. Why do they think it was chosen? Is it meaningful for them? If so, why? After a few minutes, ask the student to read the back of their index card or to explain why they picked the reason and what it means for them. Repeat until each student has a turn sharing their selected quote/reason.

## Activities

1. Explain to students that voting in local elections is done by secret ballot (Slide Deck 8). Voters mark their ballot behind a privacy screen and fold their ballot to conceal their choice. Using 'Think Pair Share', have students reflect on one or more of the following questions:
  - Why is secrecy important?
  - What could happen if elections were held publicly?
  - Why is it important to ensure a fair and impartial electoral process?
2. Using Slide Deck 8, review key aspects of the voting process in local elections in British Columbia.

Guiding questions:

- Who is qualified to vote in British Columbia local elections?
- What is the voters list?
- What are different ways that voters can cast their ballot?
- How do I mark my ballot?

3. Explain the term 'voter turnout' (Slide Deck 8) and various statistics from elections in British Columbia.

Review:

- Voter turnout is the percentage of eligible electors or registered voters that cast ballots in an election.
- Having the right to vote doesn't always mean that a person will show up at the polls to cast a ballot.

### TEACHER NOTE

Voter turnout data for your municipality may be available online and, if available, would provide for a more relevant discussion on turnout.

4. Provide copies of Activity 8.1 and give students a few minutes to complete it. Ask students to answer each question as honestly as they can.

### TEACHER NOTE

Encourage students to take the survey home and have a discussion with their parents.

5. Review some key research findings about voting and barriers to voting using Slide Deck 8. There are many different barriers to voting, including motivational barriers and access barriers.
  - Motivational barriers include low levels of political knowledge and interest in politics, lack of perceived importance, cynicism and lower sense of civic duty.
  - Access barriers include not knowing when and where to vote, lack of personal identification, challenges getting to the polling station, and language and literacy skills.
6. Independently or with a partner, have students reflect on how many zeros they recorded on the voting survey (Activity 8.1) and which barriers could affect their decision or ability to vote in the future.

## Consolidation

Create a social media style video highlighting three main points as a response to one of the following questions. Consider using visual graphics and a tag line.

- Should eligible citizens vote in elections?
- Does voting matter?
- Do you plan to vote in the future? Why?



## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Language Learners</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remind students that new immigrants, adults who have difficulty reading, language learners, persons who are homeless, newly arrived refugees, and other specific groups may face challenges understanding or accessing the election system.</li><li>• Keep the focus on ideas to increase access and the benefits our society gets from hearing different voices, not only on the disadvantages these groups face.</li></ul> |
| <b>Accommodations</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.</li></ul>   |



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Every four years, voters across British Columbia decide who will represent their interests and lead their communities by electing the members of their municipal councils or regional district boards, school boards, parks boards or the Island Trust board.

The provincial government sets out common rules that all voters and candidates must follow. However, municipalities and regional districts are responsible for conducting the elections. Every municipality and regional district has a chief election officer who is in charge of running the election.

To be eligible to vote in the [local government elections](#) as a **resident or non-resident property elector**, you must:

- Be 18 years of age or older when you register to vote, or 18 years or older on general voting day;
- Be a Canadian citizen;
- Have been a resident of B. C. for at least six months before you register to vote;
- Have either lived or owned property in the jurisdiction in which they intend to vote for at least 30 days before you register to vote; and
- Not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act*, or any other enactment, or by law from voting in a local election.

To be eligible to vote in a [school trustee election](#) in British Columbia, you must:

- Qualify either as a resident elector or a non-resident property elector;
- Be registered or deemed to be registered as an elector of the trustee electoral area; and
- Not be disqualified under the School Act, or other enactment or law, from voting in the election.

A person is not permitted to vote more than once in a trustee election for any one school district. *The School Act*

stipulates that a person may be the resident of only one trustee electoral area at a time, that being the area where the person lives, or if absent, where the person intends to return.

If you want to vote for the francophone education authority, you must be a member of the Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF) in addition to meeting the other requirements of a resident or non-resident property elector. You do not need to have a child in the school system to become a member of the CSF.

A local government must maintain and use its own list of electors if advance registration is available, unless it has adopted a by-law to implement same-day voter registration, or use the provincial voters list managed by Elections BC.

The local government-maintained **voters list** includes the names of resident electors and the names of non-resident property electors, whereas the provincial voters list only includes resident electors.

A resident elector is required to show two pieces of identification or sign a solemn declaration if their name does not already appear on the voters list. Non-resident property electors are required to register at the time of voting and show two pieces of identification, as well as the title of the property in relation to which they are voting. Contact your local government for more information about the voters list.

During the election period, you can find your voting place on your municipality or regional district website and through documentation mailed to voters.

Electors who are away, busy or unable to vote on voting day, have the option of participating in **advance voting**. One advance voting opportunity must be held 10 days prior to voting day. However, more advance voting days may be available. Please consult with your own municipality or regional district to find out how this works for your area.

Each municipality is responsible for conducting their election and determining the methods used. Options can include voting in person, by mail or through special voting opportunities held in hospitals, long-term care facilities or other locations where electors' mobility may be impaired. Please consult with your own municipality to find out how this works for your area.

Here are the basic steps to casting a ballot:

1. Once you confirm your eligibility, you are given a ballot.
2. Go behind a voting screen and mark your ballot.
3. Hand your folded ballot back to the voting clerk.
4. Your ballot is recorded and counted.

A **ballot** lists the names of the candidates running for each position in your local elections. There is a space beside each candidate's name on the ballot. You can mark your ballot with an X, shade the circle or use a checkmark. As long as you appropriately mark the ballot for your preferences and according to the number of choices, your votes will be counted.

Regarding the number of choices, if six council members are elected at large, you can vote for up to six candidates. Alternatively, if only one candidate is elected in a given race, you can only vote for one candidate. You can only vote for one type of school trustee (for your school district/electoral area, or for the francophone educational authority).

A **rejected ballot** is declared invalid by the voting officer because it was not properly marked. For example, the voter selected more than the number of candidates they were allowed to choose. In the case of local elections, one race or section may be declared valid and another may be deemed invalid.

A **spoiled ballot** is kept separate and never placed in the ballot box because it was mistakenly marked or torn and exchanged for a new ballot.

## ACTIVITY 8.1: Voting Survey

Read the questions below and answer them in the right-hand column. Include if your response is a 0 or 1. Explain the reasoning behind your answer. Afterwards, rank the different barriers in order of importance for you (1 = very important, 6 = not important).

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Attitudes towards voting</b></p> <p>People have different views about voting. For some, voting is a CHOICE. They feel free to vote or not vote in an election depending on how they feel about the candidates. For others, voting is a DUTY. They feel that they should vote in every election no matter what.</p> <p>Do you see voting as a choice or a duty?</p> <p><i>Duty=1; Choice=0.</i></p> |  |
| <p><b>Political interest</b></p> <p>To what extent would you say you are interested in politics?</p> <p><i>Somewhat or very interested=1; Not very/not at all interested=0.</i></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Issues</b></p> <p>Politicians or candidates talk about issues that are important to me.</p> <p><i>Agree=1; Disagree=0.</i></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Personal confidence</b></p> <p>Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that I can't really understand what's going on.</p> <p><i>Disagree=1; Agree=0.</i></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Attitudes towards politicians and government</b></p> <p>I do not think politicians or the government care much about what people like me think.</p> <p><i>Disagree=1; Agree=0.</i></p>   |  |
| <p><b>The impact of my vote</b></p> <p>I feel that by voting I can make a difference.</p> <p><i>Agree=1; Disagree=0.</i></p>   |  |
| <p><b>A key takeaway from this reflection for me is:</b></p>   |  |

# Notes