

# Lesson 6

## Local Government Elections



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How is our local government chosen?
- 2 How do voters decide who to vote for?
- 3 Which candidate(s) do I support and why?

### OVERVIEW

Elections are contests of leadership, ideas, politics and power, where interested individuals campaign for your support and ultimately your vote.

In this lesson, students will learn about local government elections in New Brunswick; and the different election races in their community. Individually or in groups, students will engage in the inquiry process to investigate factors when making their voting decision and to guide their research into the candidates. In the alternative activity, students can co-create a profile and work in groups to research one candidate. Afterwards, the research is shared with the rest of the class for analysis. In the *Consolidation* activity,

students reflect on the research process and what is most important to them when making their decision.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- explain the process for local government elections;
- analyze different ways to compare the candidates;
- develop an investigation plan and/or research the candidates running for election;
- compare and contrast the candidates and their viewpoints.

## Teacher Tips

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- Supplies/Needs: Slide Deck 6, access to or copies of 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.
- Online templates for all activities and any videos and slide decks are available on the project website.

## Starter

Through a 'Placemat' activity, have students answer the question: What qualities or skills would I (or my parents/guardians) like to see in our elected representatives?

- a) Divide the class into groups of four and provide each group with one large sheet of paper and a marker for each group member or provide students with access to the Google Doc version of Activity 6.1.
- b) Instruct each group to divide its sheet of paper into sections, with an area in the centre and enough separate areas around the outside to match the number of members in the group (see Activity 6.1).
- c) Ask students to respond to the question within their allotted space. Provide time for each student to share their recorded responses with the rest of their group without discussion or debate from the other students.
- d) Ask groups to decide, collectively, on the five most important/significant qualities and record them in the centre of the placemat – it is important that all group members agree on the top five qualities and skills.
- e) Review each group's top five as a class.

## Fundamentals

1. Review the process for local elections in New Brunswick. You can use Slide Deck 6 as a starting point and add specific information about the election races where you live (the name and number of positions and if they are elected at-large or by district/ward). Ask students to record notes on Activity 6.2.
2. Find out which candidates are running for election in your area. Show students where they can find this information by visiting your local government's website. Ask students to write down the candidates running for each position (Activity 6.2).

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

Through a class discussion, generate questions to frame this decision. For example:

- Why do they want to be on council?
  - Who would make a good leader?
  - Who would work well with the rest of council to make decisions for our local government?
  - Who would be an effective representative for our community or neighbourhood?
  - What issues in our community matter to me? Do they matter to candidates? Do they have ideas to address these issues?
  - What ideas or goals do the candidates have for our local government? Which plan do I support the most?
4. Through a class discussion, review different ways that you can collect information about the candidates and answer the questions you want to know (e.g., candidate websites and social media pages, web searches, news media, candidate debates or town halls, discussion with family and friends). Tell students they can even contact the candidates directly and ask them what they want to know.
  5. As a class or in groups, have students develop an investigation plan to help them make their voting decisions (Activity 6.3). Students can work in a jigsaw format or another method where the research is shared and discussed. The research should be presented in a slide deck or another format.

### TEACHER NOTE

If you decide to pose questions to the candidates, organize the questions into one document and send the list to each candidate running for office. Alternatively, you could set up a Zoom call or Google Meet with the candidates for a virtual Q&A.

### ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY

1. Through a whole class discussion, create a list of the most pressing issues in the election. Draw upon news coverage, opinion polls, the opinions of your friends/family and previous discussions.
2. Divide the class into pairs or small groups to research a candidate running for election. Co-create a checklist for creating a profile and summary for each candidate. Have students choose how the information will be presented (e.g., poster, slide deck, video, mock Facebook or Instagram profile).

Sample research profile:

- Name and photo
- Reason for running (Why do they want the job?)
- Personal information (e.g., education, career, accomplishments)
- Priorities (What issues are most important to the candidate?)
- Issues (What is their position or plan for the most pressing issues identified by the class?)

### 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.

3. Have each group share their candidate profile with the rest of the class. You can post the group work around the classroom or create a digital gallery. Students can make notes on all the candidates using Activity 6.4.

### Consolidation

Have a brief closing discussion about the candidates and the process of deciding who to vote for, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

- Do you feel ready to vote? How did your research make you feel more confident in your decision?
- Which factors do you think are most important when deciding who you will vote for?

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Below are some guiding questions for teachers for each section of the lesson.

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| <b>Starter</b>       | Can students generate a list of qualities or skills they would like to see in their elected representative?<br>Can students collectively agree on the top skills/qualities?   |
| <b>Fundamentals</b>  | Can students identify different considerations when deciding for whom to vote?<br>Can students identify what is important to them or their community and help them narrow their research?<br>Can students design an investigation plan that supports their inquiry? Can they identify trustworthy sources of information?<br>Are students posing questions while they research in order to spark new areas of interest?<br>Are students presenting information that is accurate and informative?<br>Can students analyze the information collected and make a decision?<br>Can students assess their learning and what they might do differently in the future? |
| <b>Consolidation</b> | Do students recognize that research can make it easier to reach a decision?<br>Do students understand different considerations when making voting decisions? Do they feel more prepared to vote in the future?  |

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Below are some guiding questions for teachers for each section of the lesson.

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| <b>Individual Education Plans</b>         | <p><b>Modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the concept of elected representatives using other CIVIX video resources ("Elected Representatives" and/or "Levels of Government").</li> <li>• Provide access to key terms in advance.</li> <li>• Use ability grouping to support students.</li> </ul> <p><b>Enrichment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can enhance their understanding by comparing municipal elections to provincial or federal elections. Encourage them to take note of similarities and differences. Alternatively, they could compare municipal elections to those in other countries.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Language Learners</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow students to compare electoral systems and especially municipal leadership positions to their home region and in their primary language.</li> <li>• Provide access to key terms 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 municipality and discuss the need for diversity in politics.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fredericton group aims to get more women running in municipal elections this spring: <a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/fredericton-women-municipal-1.5853705">https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/fredericton-women-municipal-1.5853705</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>- MP Mumilaaq Qaqqaq: <a href="https://globalnews.ca/news/6071654/mumilaaq-qaqqaq-nunavut-mp/">https://globalnews.ca/news/6071654/mumilaaq-qaqqaq-nunavut-mp/</a></li> <li>- Refugees in Politics: <a href="https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/11/04/maryam-monsef_n_8468048.html">https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/11/04/maryam-monsef_n_8468048.html</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Accessibility &amp; Accommodations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 'Placemat' activity for the <i>Starter</i> activity can be conducted using the Google Doc available online, or alternatively through a 'Think-Pair-Share' strategy.</li> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, considering using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.</li> <li>• Provide mobility accommodations for any activities that require movement.</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> <li>• Coordinate virtual Q&amp;A sessions with the candidates in place of candidate debates.</li> </ul>   |

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Local government councils are made up of elected officials. They are comprised of a head of council called a **mayor** and several **councillors**, collectively called **council members**. Local government councils make decisions together to meet your community's needs now and in the future.

Local government elections in New Brunswick must be held every four years, on the on the second Monday in May. Although local government elections were scheduled to take place in May 2020, the provincial government passed legislation to postpone elections due to COVID-19. The next local government elections will be held on Monday, May 10, 2021.

A **voting system** (or electoral system) is the way in which we elect our representatives. The voting system includes set rules for how preferences are recorded and the method used for determining which candidate wins. There are many different voting systems used around the world.

New Brunswick uses a system called **First Past-The-Post** (FPTP). A successful candidate must receive the most votes in order to be elected.

In order to be eligible to vote in the local government elections in New Brunswick you must:

- Be a Canadian citizen;
- Be eighteen years of age on or before polling day;
- Have been or will have been ordinarily resident in the Province for a period of at least 40 days immediately before the election; and
- Be living in the local government area, school district, or health region on Election Day.

Depending on where you live, you may be able to vote for mayor (head of a local government council) and councillor (one or more members of your local government council). You may also be able to vote for representatives for your district education council or regional health authority.

Mayors are elected **at-large** (by all eligible voters in the community). Councillors can be elected at-large or by a **district** or **ward system**, where the local government is broken down into smaller geographic areas with their own designated councillor(s). Some local governments use a mix of district and at-large systems.

In local government elections in New Brunswick, there are two types of elections: **single-member elections** and **multi-member elections**. In single-member elections, only one candidate is elected, such as in the case of a mayoral race or a council race where only one person is selected to represent one **district** (also known as a **ward**). Voters can only choose one candidate on the ballot and the candidate with the most votes wins. However, in multi-member elections, more than one member is elected so voters can choose more than one candidate if they choose (up to a maximum). For instance, if six councillors are elected at-large for the entire local government, then voters can select up to six candidates. The six candidates with the most votes are elected to council.

Voting in elections is done by secret ballot. This ensures the privacy of each voter's choice. No one except the voter knows the choice that was made.

A ballot lists the names of the candidates running for each position in your local government election. There is a space beside each candidate's name on the ballot. As long as you clearly mark the ballot for the appropriate number of candidates, your votes will be counted. This includes a checkmark, X, shading-in or another marking. Regarding the number of choices on a ballot, 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.

A **rejected** vote is declared invalid by the deputy returning officer because it was not properly marked (e.g., the voter selected more than the allowed number of candidates). In the case of local government elections, one race or section may be declared valid and another may be deemed invalid.

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

Across all local governments, there may be two, three, four or more candidates running for a position on council, depending on the race. 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.

In order to run as a candidate in a local government election in New Brunswick, you must 18 years of age on or before Election Day; a Canadian citizen; a resident of the province and the local government area for at least 6 months immediately preceding election day; and in a local government that is divided into wards for election purposes, a candidate for ward councillor must be a resident of that ward when they are nominated.

There are many ways to gather information about the local government election candidates. Community groups hold in-person or virtual town hall meetings or all-candidate debates where citizens are invited to listen to candidates speak on the issues and ask 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, when possible. Information may also be accessible online through candidate websites and social media pages. This is one of the first elections in Canada to happen during the COVID-19 pandemic, so you can expect to see a much greater focus on virtual outreach compared to traditional methods.