

Lesson 4

Political Parties



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do we have different political views?
- 2 How can I learn about the political parties?
- 3 Which political party will address the issues that matter to me?

OVERVIEW

A political party is a group of individuals who share similar political views and whose goal is to create meaningful political change. The role of citizens is to research and compare the political parties and determine which party aligns with their views.

In this lesson, students are introduced to the concept of politics by expressing their views on specific issues. After reviewing the concept of political parties, students work in groups to research one of Newfoundland and Labrador's political parties. Each group prepares information about the party's vision, their leader and platform. Afterwards, students critically analyze the political parties, and determine which party will address the issues that matter most to them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- voice their opinion on political issues;
- explain the role of political parties in our democracy;
- participate in teams by establishing positive and respectful relationships, developing trust and acting cooperatively;
- interpret, synthesize and critically analyze information about the political parties and their leaders.

Teacher Tips

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- Some individuals may jump at the opportunity to share their opinions and even try to convince others to adopt their choices, while others may prefer to keep their politics personal. Remind students that opinions should be respected, even if they differ from their own.
- Consider using a word cloud generator (such as Wordle or Word Art) to help students simplify or summarize political party messages.
- Supplies/Needs: digital access or copies of 4.1 and 4.2, internet access.
- Online templates for all activities and any videos and slide decks are available on the project website.

Starter

1. Read out a statement and ask students to vote by raising their hands if they agree or disagree. Choose statements you feel students will be comfortable answering in front of their classmates, starting with one or two school-based statements. Ask two or three students to explain their choices. After each student defends their opinion, give the other students the chance to change their opinion, if they were persuaded.

For example:

- School uniforms should be mandatory for all students.
- Homework should be banned.
- Zoos should be abolished.
- Companies that pollute our air and water should suffer consequences.
- The government should invest more money in our armed forces.
- Canada should give money and resources to poorer countries.
- Government should not interfere in the lives of individuals.

TEACHER NOTE

Consider organizing this activity inside, or outdoors, as a four corners debate, with different areas labeled as “Agree” and “Disagree” along with “I agree, but...” and “Convince Me.” Read out a statement and ask students to vote with their feet by walking to the area that fits with their opinion.

2. Afterwards, review the concept of political perspectives and politics.

- People have different values and beliefs, which influence their viewpoints and desired actions on specific issues. It is important to respect others’ opinions, even if they differ from our own.
- In any given place – a community, province or country – anywhere that groups of people live together and where rules and decisions affect everyone, there will be different viewpoints and opinions about how things should work. This includes deciding which issues are most important and how best to take action.
- Politics can be described as the activities, ideas and actions that are used to gain power in society, or the ways that citizens try to influence a government.

Fundamentals

1. Review the purpose of **political parties**.

- A political party is made up of people who share similar beliefs and goals about society and government.
- In order for the political party to have the chance to work towards its goals, the party tries to win an election and lead the government.
- Political parties are made up of members of the community. Anyone above the required age (usually 14-years-old) can be a member of a political party.
- During elections, political parties usually release a **political platform**, which outlines their priorities and actions the party will take if they are elected.

2. Review the list of registered political parties in Newfoundland and Labrador. Ask students if they have noticed any signs or advertisements from the parties in recent days or weeks.
3. Divide students into groups and assign each a political party (ideally one that is running a candidate in your electoral district). Ask students to research their assigned political party using party websites, social media accounts and online news media. Provide copies of Activity 4.1 to support the research.

Guiding questions:

- What is the party’s slogan and/or key messages?
- Who is the party leader?
- What are the party’s major ideas? What actions are they promising to take if elected?
- Who seems to be the target audience of the party?
- What is the party’s vision for Newfoundland and Labrador?

- Using the information collected, each group will create a physical or digital presentation about their assigned political party.

Co-create a checklist with your students for the presentation. For example:

- The party's logo
- One main slogan or message
- Three social media posts that represent the party's priorities or vision for the province
- A short biography of the party leader
- Two images of the party leader (taken from social media or the party's website)
- Summary of three major ideas or planned actions they would take if elected (consider using the same three issues across all parties)
- Analysis about who will be impacted by the three major ideas

- Have each group share their presentation about their party with the rest of the class. You can create a digital gallery or share the presentations on a projector/screen.

Consolidation

Have a brief closing discussion about political parties, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions. Alternatively, you could use a 'Think Pair-Share' strategy.

- What do you like the most and least about each political party? Provide evidence or examples to explain your thinking.
- Which party do you feel most attracted to and why?
- Which party do you think is going to address the issues the matter most to you and your family? Explain your answer with reference to the party's promises.
- Did your opinion change of any of the political parties after learning about them? If so, how?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

A **political issue** is a topic or subject that people speak about because it affects society as a whole and, often there are multiple opinions on different sides of any given issue.

A **perspective** is one particular point of view or outlook. Our perspectives are shaped by who we are and our environment or experiences.

The **political spectrum** provides a way to characterize different beliefs and ideologies, and distinguish between actions on political issues.

A linear spectrum is represented as a horizontal line, with the left

favouring social equality, government involvement and more social services, and the right favouring tradition, smaller government and lower taxes.

A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals whose intention is to achieve power and create meaningful political change.

Political parties are made up of interested members of the general public. Anyone above the required age (usually 14-years-old) can be a member of a political party. Party members choose their party's leader and local candidates, and help them get elected.

During an election campaign, an organized course of action is taken by a political party, its candidates and campaign teams with the intention to

share its message and ideas with voters.

A **political platform** is a series of declared principles, policies and plans on issues concerning government and the public. Candidates and parties use a communications strategy to share their platforms through announcements, advertising and events and to gain support from constituents.

Elections present an opportunity for citizens to explore key issues and to participate in constructive dialogue about priorities and public policies. This process includes establishing which issues are most important to you and your community, and evaluating how the different political parties will address them.

REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

- **Liberal Party** - www.nlliberals.ca
- **New Democratic Party** - www.nl.ndp.ca
- **NL Alliance Party** - www.nlalliance.ca
- **Progressive Conservative Party** - www.pcparty.nl.ca

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Starter	<p>Are students reflecting on their views on the statements?</p> <p>Are students being respectful of each other's opinions?</p> <p>Do students understand the concept of political perspectives?</p>
Fundamentals	<p>Are students posing questions while they research their party in order to spark new areas of interest?</p> <p>Are students presenting information that is accurate and informative?</p>
Consolidation	<p>Do student reflections demonstrate critical thinking and evaluation of the political parties?</p> <p>Are they making connections to their own priorities?</p>

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give lots of thinking time during the <i>Starter</i> activity. <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to offer their own political statements. • Once students have researched parties, encourage students to research the issue most important to them and see how the media reports the different positions of each party.
English Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat terms and rephrase statements in different ways. • Use an application or word cloud generator to simplify political party messages.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing opinions is always challenging. Be aware of issues that may be controversial and support students in positive ways if they are uncomfortable sharing their opinions. Offer written alternatives. • Select issues that matter most to your students or the community in which they live when researching the party's promises or actions they plan to take.
Accessibility & Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of using printed campaign literature, rely on materials on the party website and social media channels (digital flyers, videos, etc.). • Opt for a digital presentation to reduce physical contact or sharing of materials.