

LESSON 2

GOVERNMENT AND DEMOCRACY

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Why do we need government? What events from 1830-1849 led to the government we have today?

SUMMARY

A government is made up of the people and institutions put in place to manage the land, resources and people living within its borders. Political changes in the first half of the nineteenth century shaped the democratic form of government we have today.

In this lesson, students will work in groups to explore options for leadership and governance in an exercise called Survivor Island. Afterwards, students review the concept of government and parliamentary democracy, and investigate events from 1830-1849 that dramatically shifted our political system. In the culminating activity, students imagine the ways in which a prime minister or premier can ensure they adhere to responsible government.

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- develop an understanding of power dynamics and the importance of rules and laws;
- work collaboratively and critically with peers;
- use the concept of *cause and consequence* to determine the factors that led to responsible government in Canada;
- use the concept of *historical significance* to analyze past actions and events that have contributed to Canadian democracy;
- develop an understanding of how political, economic, and social institutions affects our lives.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Below are some sample success criteria you can use or build upon. Co-creating success criteria with your class will allow students to have ownership over their learning and understand what successful learning looks like.

I CAN...

- explain why we need leadership, rules, and government in our society;
- work collaboratively with my peers to make decisions;
- define responsible government;
- analyze and evaluate the events that led to responsible government in Canada (*cause and consequence*);
- discuss some events that were important to Canadian democracy (*historical significance*);
- explain how past events and political institutions affect my community and me.

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CURRICULUM LINKS

Grade 7	Overall Expectations	Specific Expectations
History	B3. Understanding Historical Context: describe various significant events, developments, and people in Canada between 1800 and 1850, and explain their impact;	<p>B3.1 identify factors leading to some key events and/or trends that occurred in and/or affected Canada between 1800 and 1850, and describe the historical significance of some of these events/trends for different individuals, groups, and/or communities</p> <p>B3.2 identify key political and legal changes that occurred in and/or affected Canada during this period, and explain the impact of some of these changes on various individuals, groups, and/or communities</p> <p>B3.5 identify some significant individuals and groups in Canada during this period, and explain their contribution to Canadian heritage and/or identity</p>
Oral Communication	2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;	2.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in most situations, adapting contributions and responses to suit the purpose and audience
Writing	<p>1. generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience;</p> <p>2. draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience;</p>	<p>1.4 sort and classify ideas and information for their writing in a variety of ways that allow them to manipulate information and see different combinations and relationships in their data</p> <p>2.5 identify their point of view and other possible points of view, evaluate other points of view, and find ways to acknowledge other points of view, if appropriate</p>

MINDS ON

1. Ask students to imagine they are stranded as a group on a remote island and they need to make decisions about how they will live and survive.

2. Divide students into groups and explain that each group will explore the need for leadership, organization and rules within a community by considering the following questions.

- Will everyone find their own food and shelter, or will the class work together as a team or in small groups? Explain the reasons behind your choice.
- If you decide to work as a team or in groups, how will the tasks be divided?
- Will you need a leader? If so, how will they be selected? What powers will they receive?
- Are rules necessary? If so, which rules are needed? How will they be established?
- Will there be consequences for those who break the rules or do not contribute their fair share? How will this be determined and by who?

Alternatively, the process can be self-directed with each group brainstorming what decisions would need to be made and how they would be made, in order to create a community.

3. Bring the class back together and discuss the decisions made by each group. Reflection questions:

- How was the community organized?
- Was there a leadership system? How did it work?
- Who ultimately held the power? Everyone or only the leader?
- What were the challenges with the process of making decisions and how were they overcome?

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ACTION

1. Review the concept of government and parliamentary democracy ('[Parliamentary Democracy in Ontario](#)' video). Guiding questions: Who makes the rules and decisions in our province or country? How are leaders and/or government representatives selected? How do they maintain power?

- A **government** manages the land, resources and people living within its borders. This includes creating and enforcing rules and laws.
- In a **parliamentary democracy**, the people elect members to their parliament and legislatures to make decisions on their behalf. Most members belong to political parties. The political party with the most members in the legislature usually forms the government and their leader becomes the leader of the government.
- In Canada, we adhere to the principle of responsible government, which means the government is responsible to the representatives of the people. The executive (prime minister or premier and his or her cabinet) must maintain a majority of support in the elected legislature or parliament in order to govern.

2. Using Handout 2.1 as a starting point, review the events that led to responsible government in Canada. It may be helpful to supplement this information with other resources or videos.

Additional resources:

- [Responsible Government: Introduction \(2:23\)](#)
- [Responsible Government Education Guide](#)
- [Rebellions of 1837-38 -1837 Rebellions Part 1](#)
- [Upper Lower Canada Rebellions Part 2](#)
- [1837-1838 Rebellions Part 3](#)

3. Review the concept of *cause and consequence*, as well as the difference between underlying and immediate causes, and intended and unintended consequences.

- *Cause and consequence* is a historical thinking concept used to determine the factors that affect or lead to something (e.g., an event, situation, action, interaction) as well as its impact or effects.
- Immediate causes are the circumstances that are most closely connected with the event.
- Underlying causes are broader circumstances that led up to an event but are less connected to it.
- Intended consequences are the expected effects as a result of an action or event.
- Unintended consequences are the unexpected effects as a result of an action or event.

4. Using Handout 2.1 and other resources, have students work in pairs to discuss the events that led to responsible government in Canada and fill out the graphic organizer (Activity 2.3).

5. Afterwards, have the pairs form groups with another pair in the class to discuss their choices.

6. End the activity with a whole class discussion. Final reflection questions:

- How would you rank in order of importance the events that led to responsible government in Canada?
- How do these events help us to understand the past?

CONSOLIDATION

Have a brief closing discussion about responsible government and parliamentary democracy in Canada, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

- Which event do you think was most important in creating responsible government in Canada? Explain your choice by analyzing the intended and unintended consequences.
- Is responsible government significant today? How does it relate to my community and me?
- Why is the concept of responsible government important? What does it mean to you?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Lessons are not meant to be covered entirely in one period. Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.

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ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Type	Lesson Area	Guiding Questions for Teachers
FOR LEARNING	MINDS ON	<p>Are students taking turns listening and speaking?</p> <p>Can students think of various ways to address their needs in the survival activity?</p>
AS LEARNING	MINDS ON	<p>Are students categorizing and ranking possible solutions? Are student responses realistic and plausible?</p>
	ACTION	<p>Are students actively listening and asking questions?</p> <p>Can students demonstrate an understanding of <i>cause and consequence</i>?</p> <p>Can students recognize the significance of historical events?</p>
	CONSOLIDATION	<p>Can students evaluate the importance of the events leading to responsible government on their personal lives?</p> <p>Are students able to explain the importance of the events leading to responsible government on their personal lives?</p>
OF LEARNING	CONSOLIDATION	<p>Can students evaluate the importance of the events leading to responsible government on their personal lives?</p> <p>Are students able to explain the importance of these events?</p>

LEARNING FOR ALL

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ample time for concept attainment: vocabulary in advance, explain responsible government in a way the student can understand using student interests and prior knowledge (i.e. The captain of a hockey team might need to have the support of most of the team for the team to play successfully). <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can complete an alternate consolidation by exploring Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine and Robert Baldwin, key figures in bringing responsible government to the federal government. (Resource: http://education.historicacanada.ca/en/tools/446)
English Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary in advance will help with understanding classroom discussions. Be sure to invite students to share similarities or differences from their country of origin, if applicable. This will help draw upon prior knowledge.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When introducing responsible government, be sure to mention that not all countries have these types of checks and balances in their political system. <p>Indigenous Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce consensus decision-making processes in the final discussion of the 'Minds On' activity.

ACTIVITY 2.1: SURVIVOR ISLAND

Your class is heading on an end-of-year trip across the ocean. Your flight encounters a bad storm and you become stranded on a remote island. It will be several weeks until you are rescued. Your teacher and the other adults have decided to travel to the nearest island for help. The class must figure out how everyone will try to live together and survive.

With your group, figure out how you will answer the following questions.

1. Will everyone find their own food and shelter, or will the class work together as a team or in small groups? Explain the reasons behind your choice.

2. a) Will you need a leader/leadership team? If so, how will they be selected?

b) What powers will the leader/leadership team receive?

c) What happens if people disagree with the leader? Who has the final say?

3. a) Are rules necessary? If so, which rules are needed?

b) What is the process for making rules? Who is involved in the decisions?

4. Will there be consequences for those who break the rules or do not contribute their fair share? How will any consequences or punishments be determined?

HANDOUT 2.2: SHAPING DEMOCRACY IN CANADA

Canada is a democracy. We elect members to represent us in our legislatures to make decisions and pass laws. The political party with the most number of members usually forms government, and their leader becomes the leader of the government. The leader then selects members from its party to sit on the executive council or cabinet. Cabinet members manage different responsibilities. In order to maintain power, the government must receive the support of more than half of the members in the legislature. This is called responsible government.

Below is a summary of key events that shaped our government system, in what is now known as Ontario.

Colonial Government

In the late 18th century, the colonies, that later became Canada, were under British rule. The *Constitutional Act of 1791* divided the Province of Quebec into Upper Canada (now Ontario) and Lower Canada (now Quebec). The Act also gave them legislative assemblies elected by the people. This was the first form of representative democracy.

Each legislature was composed of a legislative assembly and an executive council. The governor, chosen by Britain, selected the members of the executive council. The council held all decision-making power and was responsible only to the governor, not the people. The assembly only had an advisory role.



First meeting of the assembly and council of Upper Canada (1791) (CREDIT: ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO)

Growing Demand and Debate: 1820s

In the 1820s, the population of Upper and Lower Canada grew and changed. Instead of mostly farmers and fur traders, the colonies were now made up of merchants, carpenters, doctors, lawyers and journalists. There was a growing demand among colonists to have a voice in the decisions that affected them.

It became a debate between reformers and loyalists. Reformers wanted greater local control and decision-making about spending. They desired for the executive council to be made up the elected assembly members. They felt that this change would reduce disagreements between the executive council and assembly. As a result, more would get accomplished. Loyalists wanted to maintain tradition and keep decision-making power with Britain.



Battle of St. Eustache
(CREDIT: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA)

Rebellions: 1837-38

Peaceful efforts for change failed and pressures mounted. Tensions grew along with financial challenges for French Canadian farmers, led to violence in Upper Canada. The first uprising in November 1837, was led by Louis-Joseph Papineau. The second uprising took place in November 1838. These events resulted in 325 people dead, most of them reformers.

The events in Lower Canada inspired the Upper Canada Rebellion in 1837-1838, led by William Lyon Mackenzie. Mackenzie convinced his most radical followers to try to seize control of the government and make the colony a republic. This would eliminate any ties to the monarch and Britain. Compared to Lower Canada, the uprising was smaller and less deadly.

The rebellions prompted the appointment of Lord Durham and the writing of the Durham Report. The Report recommended the two colonies be united as one.

HANDOUT 2.2: SHAPING DEMOCRACY IN CANADA

The Reformers

In 1840, Upper and Lower Canada were united as the Province of Canada. Two Reformers, Sir Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine and Robert Baldwin, began the coalition of French and English leaders. They worked together to create a united party of Reformers.

Eventually, Reformers won a majority in government in Upper Canada in 1842. This meant that more than half of the members of the assembly were Reformers. This gave an opportunity for LaFontaine and Baldwin to voice their concerns with more political force. In the end, their elected assembly fell apart because the governor refused to work with them. This was because the governor's loyalty was to the Queen.



LaFontaine and Baldwin

(CREDIT: INSTITUTE FOR CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP)

Lord Elgin and Responsible Government

In 1847, Lord Elgin was appointed as the new governor to the Canadas. Elgin began to separate the powers of the governor from the powers of the legislatures. He recognized the importance of allowing the elected legislatures to have greater control over their own affairs.

Lord Elgin officially requested that the Reformers form government in 1848. This was the true beginning of responsible government in Canada. In response, many loyalists were upset and burned down the parliament building in Montréal. Baldwin, LaFontaine and Elgin were all personally attacked.

Even though there was opposition to the new government, it forged ahead and shaped the future of Canadian democracy.



The House of Assembly, in the Parliament of Montreal, around 1848

(CREDIT: NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA)

KEY TERMS:

Representative democracy – Where people elect individuals represent them in the legislature and make decisions on their behalf.

Legislature – The legislative body (or group) that has the power to make rules and laws. Made up of the legislative assembly and executive council.

Legislative assembly – Made up of elected members, chosen by the people.

Executive council – Made up of appointed members and responsible for implementing laws.

Rebellion – An uprising or revolt.

Responsible Government – The government maintain the support of at least half of the members in the legislature to remain in power.

ACTIVITY 2.3: CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE — RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT IN CANADA

After learning about the events that shaped responsible government in Canada, select the two most important events in your opinion and analyze the causes and consequences for each.

Immediate Causes	Underlying Causes

EVENT #1

Intended Consequences	Unintended Consequences

Immediate Causes	Underlying Causes

EVENT #2

Intended Consequences	Unintended Consequences