

2

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE



The right to vote in Canada has not always been universal. It has been withheld from many groups throughout history based on gender, race, background, religion and even occupation.

It took decades of people and groups campaigning for equality to be achieved.

Early in Canada's history individuals had to own property or pay a certain amount in yearly taxes or rent to be able to vote. Only a small number of people qualified, mostly wealthy Protestant men.

Starting in the 1870s, women campaigned with petitions, speeches and public protests for the right to vote. It took nearly 50 years for change to happen. Manitoba was the first province to pass suffrage legislation to include women in January 1916. Women in Ontario received the right to vote and run for office provincially on April 12, 1917. By 1918, women in Canada could vote federally and gained the right to run for federal office in 1919.

Even though Canadian women achieved **suffrage**, it was not applicable to all women. Women and men of several ethnic and racial minorities, such as Canadians of Chinese and Japanese origin and Indigenous Peoples, were still disenfranchised for several decades.

First Nations men could only vote if they gave up their treaty rights and registered Indian status. First Nations people were not given the right to vote in Ontario provincial elections until 1954.

Universal suffrage is the extension of the right to vote to all adult citizens, including the removal of property ownership requirements and restrictions against women, First Nations and Inuit and ethnic and religious minorities.

In addition to universal suffrage, more steps have been taken to reduce barriers and make voting more accessible. Some of these changes including longer voting hours on election day, advance voting, vote by mail, mobile polling stations, ensuring voting places are accessible for mobility devices and voting supports such Braille and large-print ballots.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* has also helped several groups force changes to election laws. Federal judges, people with mental illness and prisoners have more recently received the right to vote. Ensuring all citizens have the right to vote and the right to run for office is essential in a democratic society. These rights underpin many democratic principles, such as political tolerance, equality rights, free and fair elections, and citizen participation.

LESSON 2: UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

GUIDING QUESTIONS

How have voting rights evolved in Canada? Is equality essential to democracy?

SUMMARY

The right to vote has been withheld from many groups throughout history based on gender, race, background and religion. Universal suffrage is the right of all citizens to vote in elections and it took decades of people and groups campaigning for equality for this to be achieved.

In this lesson, students reflect on democratic rights in Canada, as well as the importance of equality, political tolerance and citizen participation in a democracy. After reviewing an overview of history of voting rights in Canada, students form groups to investigate the actions of individuals and groups that contributed to universal suffrage and improved accessibility to voting. In the culminating discussion, students have the option of assessing the most important turning point in the evolution of voting rights in Canada or articulating why equality is essential in democracy.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explore issues related to personal and societal rights and responsibilities (Citizenship Education Framework – Attributes);
- Explain the actions of individuals and groups that led to universal suffrage in Canada (Concepts of Thinking - Cause and Consequence);
- Work in a collaborative and critically thoughtful manner with their peers to gather, analyze and communicate research;
- Assess the significance of the pathway to universal suffrage in Canada and democracy today (Concepts of Thinking – Historical Significance);
- Develop attitudes that foster electoral participation and civic engagement (Citizenship Education Framework – Attributes).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can explain the democratic rights we have in Canada and the significance of key democratic principles;
- I can use the concept of *cause and consequence* to explain the actions and impact of individuals and groups that led to universal suffrage in Canada;
- I can work collaboratively with my peers to research, analyze and effectively communicate information;
- I can use the concept of *historical significance* to analyze the universal suffrage movement;
- I can explain the importance of equality in democracy.

CURRICULUM LINKS

CHC2D – Overall Expectations

A1. Historical Inquiry: use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of Canadian history since 1914

B2. Communities, Conflict, and Cooperation: analyse some key interactions within and between different communities in Canada, and between Canada and the international community, from 1914 to 1929, and how they affected Canadian society and politics

B3. Identity, Citizenship, and Heritage: explain how various individuals, organizations, and specific social changes between 1914 and 1929 contributed to the development of identity, citizenship, and heritage in Canada

C1. Social, Economic, and Political Context: describe some key social, economic, and political events, trends, and developments between 1929 and 1945, and assess their impact on different groups in Canada

D1. Social, Economic, and Political Context: describe some key social, economic, and political events, trends, and developments in Canada between 1945 and 1982, and assess their significance for different groups in Canada

E1. Social, Economic, and Political Context: describe some key social, economic, and political events, trends, and developments in Canada from 1982 to the present, and assess their significance for different groups in Canada

CHC2D – Specific Expectations

A1.5 use the concepts of historical thinking when analysing, evaluating evidence about, and formulating conclusions and/or judgements regarding historical issues, events, and/or developments in Canada since 1914

B2.4 explain the goals and accomplishments of some groups and/or movements that contributed to social and/or political cooperation during this period

B3.1 explain how some individuals, groups, and/or organizations contributed to Canadian society and politics during this period and to the development of identity, citizenship, and / or heritage in Canada

C1.4 describe the main causes of some key political developments and/or government policies in Canada during this period, and assess their impact on different groups in Canada

D1.4 describe some key political developments and/or government policies in Canada during this period, and assess their significance for different groups in Canada

E1.4 describe some key political developments and/or government policies that have affected Indigenous peoples in Canada since 1982, and assess their significance for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals and communities

LESSON 2: UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

MINDS ON

1. Ask students if they know what **democratic rights** we have in Canada. In summary, our democratic rights include the ability to participate in political activities and to have a democratic form of government.

There are three related sections in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*:

- SECTION 3: Every Canadian citizen, 18 years of age or older, has the right to vote in a government election, and become a candidate and serve as an elected representative.
- SECTION 4: Governments must hold elections at least every five years.
- SECTION 5: An annual sitting of legislatures is required as a minimum (elected representatives must at least once per year).

2. In addition to **democratic rights**, other aspects contribute to Canada's democracy. Review the principles of democracy (Handout 1.2) and connect our **democratic rights** to specific principles (equality rights, free and fair elections, citizen participation, political tolerance). Even in a democratic country such as Canada, there have been times when one or more of these principles have not been upheld or they have been limited to specific individual or groups. It is important for students to understand that democratic rights are limited when principles of democracy are not upheld or equally applied.

3. Facilitate a discussion about voting rights and democratic principles.

- Why is equality important in democracy?
- Why is political tolerance vital for democracy?
- Why is citizen participation essential in a democracy?
 - a) Give students time to reflect on the questions and consider events they have studied previously (e.g., first wave feminist movement, *War Measures Act*, internment of specific groups, disenfranchisement of specific groups over time, historical citizen participation to bring about change).
 - b) Divide students into groups of three and assign each group member one specific question to investigate and then share findings with their group.
 - c) Give groups time to discuss all three questions.
 - d) Conclude by having a class discussion on the three questions.

Teacher note: Be sensitive to issues at home that may challenge perspectives around democratic participation, such as religious reasons or traditions followed by certain groups.

ACTION

1. Explain to students that the right to vote in Canada has not always been universal. Many groups have been excluded throughout history based on gender, race, background and religion. Watch the 'Right to Vote' video (3:21 min) and review Handout 2.1.

Video clarification: Although women gained the right to vote by 1918, there were still many exclusions due to race, ethnic origin and religion. Universal suffrage for all women was not achieved until the 1960's.

2. Divide the class into groups to research the major developments in the history of voting rights in Canada. Groups could focus on one particular period or be assigned a specific group, within or across periods. For example:

- Strand B (1914-1929) – Women's suffrage movement (1916-1918)
- Strand B (1914-1929) – 1920 *Dominion Elections Act* (1920)
- Strand C (1945-1982) – First Nations suffrage movement (1960)
- Strand D (1945-1982) – Universal suffrage (1960) and/ or *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982)
- Strand E (1982-present) – Persons with disabilities
- Strand E (1982-present) – Inmates and prisoners

Using Handout 2.1 as a starting point, have each group conduct research into which historical action or condition was most responsible for their designated group achieving the right to vote.

- How notable was the event at the time? What was the impact on the period?
- How widespread and lasting were the consequences? Is it still significant today?
- How symbolic or representative of historical issues or trends were the consequences?
- How does it help us understand why voting rights evolved in Canada?

Teacher note: Two versions of Handout 2.1 have been provided. Version 2 is written at a lower reading level.

3. Have groups share their research through a classroom presentation or through a jigsaw method where findings are shared within groups. Depending on the method used, the presentation could incorporate different multi-media formats or be shared through a skit.

LESSON 2: UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

4. Through a closing discussion, have students rank the significance of the events on universal suffrage. Ask students to consider the following questions to help justify their rankings:

- How does each group's pathway to suffrage compare or differ?
- Were suffrage movements linked to one another? If so, how?

*Teacher note: Review the concept of **cause and consequence** with students. This concept requires students to determine the factors that affected or led to something and its impact/effects. Students develop an understanding of the complexity of causes and consequences, learning that something may be caused by more than one factor and may have many consequences, both intended and unintended.*

CONSOLIDATION

Select one of the following activities to consolidate the learning. Give students the choice of which one they would like to complete. The activities can be completed in small groups or individually, depending on available time. The completed task should be shared with the whole class, through a Gallery Walk or pairing students or groups to present their completed tasks.

1. Choose one moment that you think marked the most important turning point for voting rights and Canadian democracy. Make two arguments to support your choice.
2. Read the parliamentary debates from the women's suffrage era and the arguments made by Members of Parliament against granting women the right to vote. Ask students to write a rebuttal to one or more of the members outlining two reasons why women should have the same voting rights as men.

"The case against 'woman suffrage'" (The Toronto Star, October 11, 2008)

Selected quotes:

"I say that woman suffrage implies not only the casting of the ballot, but the entering of women into the field of politics. Politics is modified war. There is struggle, strife, contention, bitterness, heart-burning, excitement and agitation, all things which are out of harmony with the true character of womanhood." (Rodolphe Lemieux, Liberal MP, Gaspé, Quebec)

"Far from being a step forward for women, this so-called emancipation will mean disaster to those on whose behalf it is granted, as well as to the nation at large. Let us consider the social position of women in the state. Everywhere they are tendered respect, admiration, attention; in a word, they are idealized. This admiration is extended to them because we all recognize their sublime mission; that is to say, the moral and intellectual development of our children. I believe that it is a dangerous experiment to take them away from our homes." (Marie-Joseph Demers, Liberal MP, St. John's-Iberville, Newfoundland)

"Woman's place is not at political rallies, on election committees or in the polling booth. The ideal spot for woman is the family fireside. Isn't she, in all truth, the angel of the hearth?" (Joseph-Emile D'Anjou, Liberal MP, Rimouski, Quebec)

"The reward offered the women of Canada by the Prime Minister will become the instrument of their torture and the cause of their downfall. It will injure women physically. Who shall say that at all times they will be equal to the excitements of caucus rows, campaign slanders, bribes, inflammable speeches, torch parades and balloting on stormy days?" (Charles Fournier, Liberal MP, Bellechasse, Quebec)

"The physiology of woman, the anatomy of woman, reveals that she is in this world for the purpose of love and motherhood and not for the purpose of political strife." (Jean-Joseph Denis, Liberal MP, Joliette, Quebec)

LESSON 2: UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

ASSESSMENT

Ask students to answer the following question (either formative or summative assessment).

Question: What is the most significant historical event that contributed to universal suffrage in Canada?

Assessment Rubric

Criteria	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Understanding of content (e.g., concepts, ideas, interrelationships, procedures, processes)	Demonstrates limited knowledge of content	Demonstrates some knowledge of content	Demonstrates considerable knowledge of content	Demonstrates thorough knowledge of content
Use of processing skills (e.g., interpreting, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating data, evidence, and information; detecting point of view and bias; formulating conclusions)	uses processing skills with limited effectiveness	uses processing skills with some effectiveness	uses processing skills with considerable effectiveness	uses processing skills with a high degree of effectiveness
Expression and organization of ideas and information (e.g., clear expression, logical organization) in written forms	expresses and organizes ideas and information with limited effectiveness	expresses and organizes ideas and information with some effectiveness	expresses and organizes ideas and information with considerable effectiveness	expresses and organizes ideas and information with a high degree of effectiveness
Making connections within and between various contexts (e.g., between topics/issues being studied and between past, present, and future contexts)	makes connections within and between various contexts with limited effectiveness	makes connections within and between various contexts with some effectiveness	makes connections within and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness	makes connections within and between various contexts with a high degree of effectiveness