

Date Reviewed

March 2023

Course

[Explorations in Social Studies 11](#)

Topic

Women's Rights

Big Idea

Social justice initiatives can transform individuals and systems.

Essential Question

What have been the turning points for women's rights in Canada?

Content

Students are expected to know the following:

- methods used by individuals, groups, and organizations to promote social justice (adapted from Social Justice 12)

Curricular Competencies

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

- Assess the significance of people, places, events, phenomena, ideas, or developments (significance)

Core Competencies

[Communication](#) - I can identify Canadian women who were trailblazers for women's rights.

[Thinking](#) – I can analyze significant turning points in women's rights in Canada.

[Personal and Social](#) - I can explain what needs to be done to remove barriers to gender equality in Canada today.

First People's Principles of Learning

Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Introduction

- Use a [Think Pair Share](#) strategy to have student discuss the following:
 - What are some issues that are important to women today?
 - What opinions do you have about these issues?

Pre-Assessment

- Provide students with copies of the handout “KWL: How have women’s rights in Canada changed over the past 150 years?”.
- Have students fill in the columns for what they know and wonder about the history of women’s rights in Canada.

Interactive Learning Activities

Part 1: Women’s Suffrage

- Explain that the *Electoral Franchise Act* of 1885 prevented Canadian women from voting. Apart from the temporary and selective right to vote granted to women under the [Wartime Elections Act](#) in 1917, women were first granted the right to vote federally in 1918. (However, Asian and Indigenous Women were still excluded for decades.)
- Write on the board “Right to Vote” along with the synonyms “Suffrage” and “Franchise”.
- Explain that Nellie McClung was an important advocate of women's rights and suffrage. As a result of her campaigning, Manitoba became the first Canadian province to give women the franchise in 1916.
- Show [Heritage Minute: Nellie McClung](#) (1:01).
- Ask:
 - How did Nellie McClung challenge “appropriate” gender roles of her time?
 - Why did some people think that women should not be able to vote?
 - What strategies did McClung use to promote women’s right to vote?
- Explain that in 1916 women in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta achieved the right to vote in provincial elections. The following year women in BC and Ontario got the vote. In 1940, Quebec was the last province to grant women the vote. In 1951, the Northwest Territories became the last territory to do so.
- Using a [Think-Pair-Share](#) strategy, have students discuss possible reasons for regional differences in women achieving the right to vote.
- Divide students into 5 groups
 - Western Canada
 - Ontario
 - Quebec
 - Atlantic Canada
 - The North
- Have each group use [Women’s Suffrage in Canada](#) to research how and when women gained the vote in their assigned region. Provide students with the handout “Women’s Suffrage in Canada” to record their findings.
- Afterwards have groups share their findings with the class.
- Debrief by asking:
 - Why was progress so slow in achieving universal suffrage?

- o Why were the suffrage campaigns in Québec so different from the rest of Canada?
- o What were some of the difficulties faced by the organizations?
- o Who was excluded from the suffrage campaigns?

Part Two: The Person's Case

- Show the short video [How 5 Women Changed Canada Forever Over a Cup of Tea](#) (2:45).
- Ask: What was the issue? How did five Canadian women solve this problem?
- Explain that this group of five Alberta women were plaintiffs in a court case that argued women were “persons” under the *British North America Act* (now the *Constitution Act, 1867*) and, therefore, women could be Senators. The [Persons Case](#) was a groundbreaking case for women's rights in Canada. The case was brought before the Supreme Court of Canada in 1927. It was decided in 1929 by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, Canada's highest appeals court at the time. It was a landmark case in the long struggle by women to achieve political and legal equality in Canada.
- Provide students with a copy of the handout “The Famous Five”. Show the video [Did You Know? - The Famous Five and the Persons Case](#) (6:00) and have students record notes.
- Divide students into 5 groups:
 - o Emily Murphy
 - o Nellie McClung
 - o Henrietta Muir Edwards
 - o Louise McKinney
 - o Irene Parlby
- Provide students with access to [The Famous Five Women](#). Have each group read the profile to identify their person's contributions to changing discriminatory laws and gaining rights for women in Canada.
- Have groups present their person's contributions to women's rights in Canada.

Part 3: Royal Commission on the Status of Women

- Explain that the 1960s were a time of social change. In 1967 Canada created a Royal Commission on the Status of Women with the goal of creating gender equality in all areas of Canadian society.
- Provide students with access to the [Statement by the Prime Minister on the 50th Anniversary of the report by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada](#).
- Have students use the handout “Status of Women” to list the areas that where progress has been made and where work still needs to be done.

Part 4: Gender Equality Today

- Explain that the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), enacted as part of the *Constitution Act* in 1982, outlaws discrimination based on sex.
- Write on the board the United Nations' definition of gender equality: equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all genders.
- Ask: Does gender equality exist in Canada today? Use the [Barometer Strategy](#) to have

students take a stand on this issue.

- Provide students with the handout “Gender Equality?” and access to the websites [Gender Results Framework](#), [Women in Canada](#), [Gender Equality Achievements](#), and [Canadian Women’s Foundation](#). Provide time for students to record current facts about:
 - Economics
 - Leadership
 - Violence
 - Mental Health
- Afterwards use a [Think-Pair-Share](#) strategy to ask students what surprised them about the status of gender equality in Canada today.
- Have students respond in an [Exit Ticket](#): What is the most significant barrier to gender inequality in Canada today?

Post-Assessment

- Provide students with access to [Women in Canadian History: A Timeline](#) and a copy of the handout “Turning Points for Women’s Rights in Canada”.
- Have students select the five most significant turning points for women’s rights in Canada from Confederation to today and provide a rationale for each.
- Then have students revisit their KWL charts to fill in the “learn” column.

Extension Activities

- Share the fact that Canada ranks 62nd out of 193 countries for the representation of women in Parliament. At the rate Canada is going, it will take until 2075 for women to hold half the seats. There won’t be gender parity in our lifetimes unless we implement incentives or quotas.
- Organize a debate on the topic: "Be it resolved that 50% of all parliamentary seats should be reserved for women."

Additional References

Canada. 2021. “Why does gender equality matter?”

<https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/commemorations-celebrations/women-impact/learning-toolkit/educational-guide/why-gender-equality-matter.html>

Canada. Status of Women Canada. 2020. “Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada.”

<https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/commemoration/roycom-en.html>

Canada. Status of Women Canada. 2020. “Women in Canadian History: A Timeline.”

<https://web.archive.org/web/20201008053355/https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/commemoration/whm-mhf/timeline-chronologie-en.html>

CPAC. 2014. “Did You Know? - The Famous Five and the Persons Case.” *YouTube*.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if_pyx5dm9Y

ESRI Canada. [n.d.] “Canadian Heroines.”

<https://esrica-marketing.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=57318542d6574515845415220f6e02f7>

Forster, Merna. 2017. "Women of Worth." *Canada's History*.
<https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/women/women-of-worth>

Historica Canada Education Portal. [n.d.] "Women in Canadian History: Education Guide."
<https://fb.historicacanada.ca/education/english/women-in-canadian-history/>

Historica Canada. [ca.2015?]. "Women's Suffrage in Canada: Education Guide."
http://education.historicacanada.ca/files/108/Womens_Suffrage.pdf

Historica Canada. 2016. "Heritage Minutes: Emily Murphy." *YouTube*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njAO38Og1-k>

Historica Canada. 2016. "Heritage Minutes: Nellie McClung." *You Tube*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdbG6EIHrbs>

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<http://education.historicacanada.ca/en/tools/75?c=32>

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<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/royal-commission-on-the-status-of-women-in-canada>

Public Service Alliance of Canada. 2015. "Canadian Women's History."
<https://psac-ncr.com/canadian-womens-history>

Strong-Boag, Veronica, "Early Women's Movements in Canada: 1867–1960". In *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. Article published August 15, 2016; Last Edited August 15, 2016.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/early-womens-movements-in-canada>

Strong-Boag, Veronica, "Women's Suffrage in Canada". In *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. Article published June 20, 2016; Last Edited August 25, 2016.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/suffrage>

"Timeline: Women's Suffrage." 2021. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/womens-suffrage>

Women in Canada. 2015. "Women. Are. Persons." *YouTube*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFCsMtZA5t0>

Materials and Resources

KWL Chart:
How have women's rights in Canada changed over the past 150 years?

Know	Wonder	Learn

Women's Suffrage in Canada

Use <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/collection/womens-suffrage-in-canada> to research how and when women gained the vote in your assigned region.

Region
Year(s) women gained the vote in this region <i>(If there is more than one province in the region, there may be more than one date.)</i>
One suffrage organization in this region <i>(Name the organization and list what their focus was and what they accomplished.)</i>
Facts about suffrage in this region <i>(List the top 5-10 things we should know.)</i>

Status of Women

Read the Prime Minister's statement

<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/statement-by-the-prime-minister-on-the-50th-anniversary-of-the-report-by-the-royal-commission-on-the-status-of-women-in-canada-894933327.html>

List the areas where Canada has made progress and areas where there is still work to be done.

Successes	Challenges

Gender Equality?

Use the websites

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181018165826/https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/commemoration/gew-ses/achievements-realizations-en.html> and <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/> to research gender equality in Canada today.

Economic Inequality (poverty, wage gap, careers options)	Leadership Roles (politics, business)
Gender-Based Violence (sexual assault, harassment)	Mental Health (stereotypes, sexualization)

Turning Points for Women's Rights in Canada

Use the following timeline

<https://web.archive.org/web/20201008053355/https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/commemoration/whm-mhf/timeline-chronologie-en.html>

Select the top five turning points for women's rights in Canada from Confederation to today. Provide a rationale for selecting each event as a significant turning point.

Event	Significance