

Date Reviewed

February 2023

Course

[Social Studies 5](#)

Top

Women's Rights

Big Idea

Canada's policies and treatment of minority peoples have negative and positive legacies.

Essential Question

What were the most significant turning points for gaining rights for women in Canada?

Learning Standards

Content

Students are expected to know the following:

- human rights and responses to discrimination in Canadian society
 - examples of individuals who have fought for change and spoke out against injustice

Curricular Competencies

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

- Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, and 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 why it's important for women to have equal rights.

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:
 - Are men and women equal in Canada today?
 - Are there any areas where girls and women are not able to participate?

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

- 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?
 - Why were the suffrage campaigns in Québec so different from the rest of Canada?
 - What were some of the difficulties faced by the organizations?
 - 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 Senators. The [Persons Case](#) was a ground-breaking 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:
 - Emily Murphy
 - Nellie McClung
 - Henrietta Muir Edwards
 - Louise McKinney
 - 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.

Post-Assessment

- Provide students with access to [Women in Canada: History 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.
- 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

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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>

Turning Points for Women's Rights in Canada

Use the following timeline.

<https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/commemorations-celebrations/womens-history-month/women-history-canada-timeline.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