

Grade 6

# BUILDING FUTURE VOTERS

*A Resource for Teaching and Learning about Citizen  
Participation, Elections and Democracy*



**At Elections Alberta**, our vision is to inspire and engage participation in the democratic process.

Democracy is most vibrant when all people participate – people of all backgrounds and all ages. We have developed this resource to assist educators in encouraging political participation among youth, in order to build involved citizenship that lasts a lifetime.

This resource will enable students to better understand the concepts of democracy, the right to vote, the organizations and responsibilities of Canadian governments, and the impact of participation in the electoral process on voters and government's decision-making.

We hope this resource will help to fill a knowledge gap identified by educators in the past. Elections Alberta has often been asked for materials to facilitate learning – and *Building Future Voters* is our enthusiastic response to that challenge. Our thanks go to InPraxis Group for lending their expertise to make our objective a reality.

It is my hope that *Building Future Voters* will contribute to the development of political and democratic awareness in youth and become an invaluable teaching tool for educators.



**Lorne R. Gibson**  
Chief Electoral Officer

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Elections Manitoba

Elections British Columbia

Elections New Brunswick

Elections Canada

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Teachers should check each website for appropriateness before using it in the classroom or providing the website address to students.

The developers have made every effort to acknowledge sources used in this resource. If any questions arise as to use of source materials, we will be pleased to make the necessary corrections in future printings.



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Forms and other support materials are also available on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca), by accessing the *Education* tab.

# Building Future Voters - Grade 6

## A Resource for Teaching and Learning about Citizen Participation, Elections and Democracy

The vision of Elections Alberta is to inspire and engage participation in the democratic process. This vision can be achieved if citizens are encouraged to build deep understandings about democracy as well as an appreciation of the potential impact of their actions on their own communities.

### About *Building Future Voters*

This resource is about more than voting. It encourages the involvement of students in their schools and communities as a necessary first step to involvement in political processes, including voting.

This resource provides opportunities for students to:

- Engage in an exploration of democracy, provincial government, the electoral process and decision-making in the context of their lives and involvement in their communities
- Participate in decision-making and consider ways that they can be active, participatory citizens
- Explore multiple understandings of citizenship, identities, belonging and participation
- Build understandings of the electoral process in Alberta and the concepts of responsibilities and empowerment of individuals and government
- Apply those understandings to the development and implementation of a class project that is committed to making a difference in their homes, schools or communities.

*Building Future Voters* consists of the following components:

- This teaching and learning resource, which includes approaches, activities, assessment strategies, visual organizers and backgrounders for teaching about citizen participation, elections and democracy.
- *Build the Vote!*, which provides the process and materials to conduct an election simulation in the classroom.
- *Building Future Voters: A Resource for Returning Officers*, which provides Returning Officers with information and activities for participating with Alberta classrooms as they learn about the electoral process.
- The *Building Future Voters* CD, which includes PDF versions of this resource, *Build the Vote!* and the Returning Officer's resource. The CD also includes television and radio advertisements produced by Elections Alberta as well as other provincial electoral offices. It includes a *Building Future Voters* mini-library, with additional PDF documents that may be useful as background information on the electoral process.

*In the Grade 6 Social Studies program, students examine how participation in the democratic process is a means for governments and citizens to effect change in their communities. They explore how democratic principles and ideals are reflected in the structure and functions of local and provincial governments.*

### General Outcome 6.1: Citizens Participating in Decision Making

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the dynamic relationship between governments and citizens as they engage in the democratic process.

Elections Alberta's **Election Simulation Toolkit** includes the following items:

- Electoral Division Map
- Provincial Electoral Division Map
- Voting Screen
- Pencils (3)
- Paper Ballot Box Seals (3)
- Election Officer Badges
- Scrutineer Badges
- "Vote Here" sign (with arrow tip)
- Registration Officer Sign
- Poll Book (modified to include 6 pages)
- Statement of Poll (photocopy)
- Voter Template for Visually Impaired
- Guide for Scrutineers
- Guide for Polling Place Officials
- Guide for Use of the Special Ballot Poll
- Guide for the Conduct of Mobile Polls
- Guide for Candidates on the *Election Act*
- Information for Students on Provincial Elections (brochure).

Contact Elections Alberta using the information provided on page 4 of this resource to order the toolkit.



This resource supports selected learning outcomes that deal with the concepts of:

- Representative and direct democracy
  - Social participation
  - Responsibilities of provincial government
- The provincial electoral process.

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Online Booking and Feedback forms: [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca), under the *Education* tab.

Elections Alberta welcomes the ongoing participation of teachers and students by:

- Providing feedback and suggestions on the use of these resources. A **Teacher's Feedback Form (p. 154)** is provided at the end of this resource with directions for sending it to Elections Alberta. This form can be completed online at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca).
- Submitting ideas, activities and student products to be shared with other teachers and students on the Elections Alberta website. **Teaching Ideas & Student Work Submission and Permission forms (pp. 155-156)** are provided at the end of this resource.
- Supporting the involvement of Returning Officers in the classroom. Contact the Elections Alberta office at the contact information on this page or access the online booking form at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca) to request the participation of a Returning Officer.

This resource may be used to support, extend or replace sections in the core textbook resources at this grade level, as students benefit from the use of multiple resources in their learning.

The Grade 6 Social Studies Program of Studies focuses on citizenship, identity and democratic processes of decision-making within society. Students focus on ways that they can become involved in their communities. They develop beliefs, values and attitudes that enable them to influence and effect change. Community involvement, governance and decision-making through the electoral process can be a natural place for students to explore issues, challenges and decisions in a democratic society.

*Building Future Voters* moves students from an understanding of the electoral process to an emphasis on political participation in the larger picture of commitment to democratic ideals. Students are encouraged to see voting as both a starting point and a natural extension of their involvement in their communities and in current issues.

*Building Future Voters* provides a context through which students explore and investigate provincial electoral processes and the values of impartiality and effectiveness in a democratic system. Strategies emphasize developing an interest in and commitment to the idea of participating in the electoral process. *Building Future Voters* provides an overview of the provincial level of government and encourages students to connect these understandings to the broader concept of representative democracy.



## Engaging Students in Learning

*Building Future Voters* provides an introduction as well as four learning sequences that develop and support **selected** outcomes in the Grade 6 Social Studies Program of Studies. The introduction and learning sequences comprise from four to eight weeks of time in the school year, depending on the activities that are implemented. The suggested time allocation for each section is based on 45-minute classes.

### Make It Matter

What are the best ways to participate and bring about change?

This section introduces an overarching issue to students. The overarching issue provides a context for the entire inquiry presented in this resource. Students explore examples of ways that youth can take a stand on issues and questions that are of importance to them. They decide on a **class action project** that they believe would make a difference in their school or community.

### Learning Sequence 1

Why participate in a democracy?

Students can experience challenges as they develop understandings of the concepts of democracy and representation. This learning sequence encourages students to explore what democracy means. It examines similarities and differences between direct and representative democracy, and asks students to consider the extent to which the principles of democracy encourage participation and involvement.

### Learning Sequence 2

Why does provincial government matter?

The provincial level of government has an effect on many aspects of day-to-day life. A review of provincial government can develop students' understandings of the concept of representative democracy as well as the responsibility of government. Learning Sequence 2 encourages students to explore the concept of responsibility and how responsibilities are carried out through government ministries and departments.

### Learning Sequence 3

If I could vote, would I?

The electoral process represents one of the fundamental principles of democracy – that of citizen participation. The electoral process emphasizes the values of equity, fairness, accountability and openness. Learning Sequence 3 invites students to explore and experience the electoral process in Alberta. Students experience how to vote, the impact of a vote, how to convey messages and how to participate.



### Suggested Time Allocation

#### *Make It Matter*

2 to 4 45-minute class periods

#### *Learning Sequence 1*

6 to 10 45-minute class periods

#### *Learning Sequence 2*

5 to 8 45-minute class periods

#### *Learning Sequence 3*

6 to 10 45-minute class periods

#### *Learning Sequence 4*

4 to 6 45-minute class periods



### Make It Matter

The **class action project** will add a variable amount of time to the implementation of the inquiry in this resource.

## ● Learning Sequence 4

### What matters after an election?

The processes of democracy do not end with an election. In Learning Sequence 4, students explore ways that they can build strategies for participation and involvement in their school and communities.

## ● Working with Returning Officers

Throughout *Building Future Voters*, activities encourage interaction with Returning Officers of an Alberta electoral division. Suggestions include inviting a Returning Officer to the classroom and involving him or her with students' learning in different projects. All requests for the participation of a Returning Officer must be made through Elections Alberta, at the contact information provided on page 4 of this resource. An online booking request form is also available on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca), under the *Education* tab.

### ● Features

Within each section of the resource, features provide support for different learning preferences, abilities and interests, concept, skill and inquiry development, integrated planning, sharing, assessment and reflection.



**Time Allocations** are provided for implementing each learning sequence. These time estimates are based on 45-minute class periods.



**What to Prepare** provides a list of student resources, graphic organizers and materials that are needed to implement the activities in each learning sequence.



**Make It Matter** signals information, student resources and strategies for implementing the **class action project**. Strategies are connected to the inquiry process used in this resource.



**Did You Know** is provided in both the teaching suggestions and the student resources. This feature provides additional information and support for developing understandings.



**Weblinks** provide Internet URLs that support learning strategies and provide additional information. Weblinks are provided for teachers and found in student resources.



**Find Out More** is provided for teachers and featured in the student resources. This feature encourages research and inquiry skills by providing references to additional resources and sources of information.



**Learning Log** is featured in the student resources. This feature presents reflective questions that encourage critical thinking and personal connections.



**Your Turn** gives a signal to students that they will be asked to complete a task. Directions for the tasks are provided.



**Differentiate** provides suggestions and strategies for addressing differing learning needs, interests and prior knowledge.



**Integrate** identifies opportunities to integrate strategies and activities and develop outcomes across different subject areas in Alberta programs of studies.



**Assess & Reflect** provides suggestions, strategies and tools for assessment of students. Rubrics, checklist templates and assessment tools are included in each section of the resource. Strategies are also provided for student reflection and metacognition.



**Share** provides approaches for sharing learning in multiple contexts, including with Returning Officers, parents and community members.



**Teacher Backgrounders** provide detailed information to support students' learning of concepts and information related to provincial government and the electoral process. They also provide weblinks for additional support.

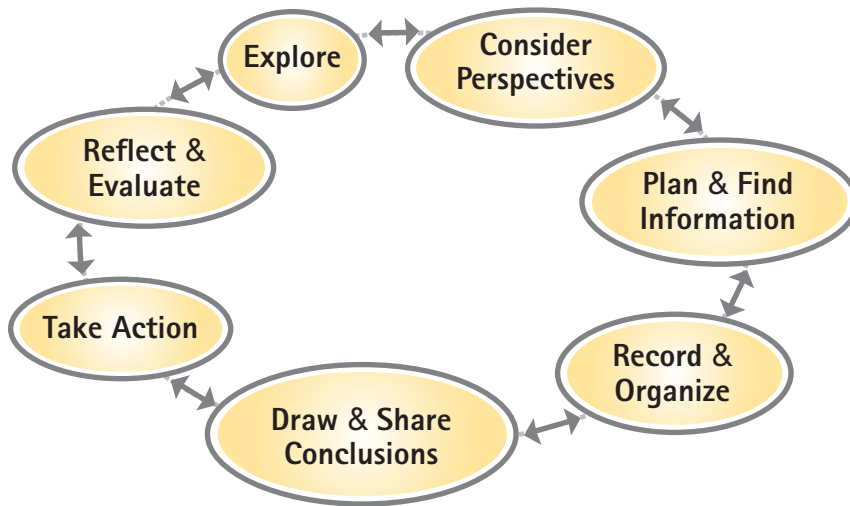


**Student Resources** can be photocopied and used with students in a number of ways. Each section of the student learning resources can be provided as students work through specific activities. Specific handouts may be selected for those activities that are implemented in the classroom. The resources can also be photocopied as a booklet and provided to students to work through at varying rates.



## Engaging Students in Inquiry

The inquiry model used in this resource provides opportunities for students to develop and apply research and social participation skills. Students are asked to explore inquiries by starting with their own knowledge and perspectives, use research skills to collect information, and apply critical thinking skills to develop conclusions and consider social action.



The process	Purpose of each step of the inquiry process	Questions that can guide inquiry
<b>Explore</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivate and generate interest</li> <li>Establish prior knowledge and experiences</li> <li>Identify concepts and understandings</li> <li>Make predictions</li> </ul>	What do we already know? What do we think about this issue? What do we need to understand about this issue? How does this issue or question affect us? What interests us about this issue or question? Why is this important?
<b>Consider Perspectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify research questions</li> <li>Identify individuals and groups involved with the question or issue</li> <li>Consider different perspectives and opinions</li> </ul>	What questions do we have? Who is affected and why? What different opinions exist?
<b>Plan &amp; Find Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on research process</li> <li>Identify, locate and organize sources and information</li> <li>Allocate tasks</li> </ul>	How will we find out what we need to know and understand? What type of information do we need? What sources do we need to consult? What is the best way to research? Who can we find out more from?

The process	Purpose of each step of the inquiry process	Questions that can guide inquiry
<b>Record &amp; Organize</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record information</li> <li>• Organize information collected</li> <li>• Analyze the information</li> <li>• Make connections and comparisons</li> </ul>	<p>How will we record our research?</p> <p>What similarities and differences do we see?</p> <p>What comparisons can we make?</p> <p>What connections do we see?</p>
<b>Draw &amp; Share Conclusions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present the information</li> <li>• Draw conclusions</li> <li>• Analyze the information</li> <li>• Assess information</li> <li>• Consider solutions, perspectives, alternatives and predictions</li> <li>• Make decisions</li> </ul>	<p>How will we share our information?</p> <p>What would happen if...?</p> <p>What conclusions can we make?</p> <p>What evidence supports our conclusions?</p>
<b>Take Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify actions</li> <li>• Implement action</li> </ul>	<p>What will we do with what we have learned?</p> <p>What would happen if...?</p> <p>How can we contribute?</p> <p>How can we make a difference?</p> <p>What should we do next?</p>
<b>Reflect &amp; Evaluate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on actions</li> <li>• Consider effectiveness</li> <li>• Assess learning</li> <li>• Identify further research</li> <li>• Start the inquiry process again</li> </ul>	<p>How effective were our actions?</p> <p>What should we change?</p> <p>What should we do next?</p> <p>What do we need to find out about?</p>

## ■ Assessing Students

There are a number of opportunities to assess student work. The following tools are provided with the learning sequences in the resource:

- Criteria checklists
- Rubrics for summative assessment of students' work
- Rating scales for students to assess their learning.

**Criteria checklists** provide assessment criteria that address outcomes from the Grade 6 Social Studies Program of Studies. Each criteria statement represents a cluster of outcomes and includes all Values and Attitudes, Knowledge and Understandings, and Skills and Process outcomes supported by the activities in each learning sequence.

The criteria checklists can be used directly to:

- Observe students as they work individually or in groups
- Monitor student participation in group or whole classroom activities and discussions
- Create rubrics with students to assess products they create
- Develop checklists to assess student work.

The checklists can also help assess where students are at the beginning or end of the section. Assessing students at the beginning of the section provides support for making decisions about differentiating instruction or making choices about which activities will be used or how they should be modified.

The checklist can be photocopied and stapled or glued in a folder for each student or can be used to assess students as they work in groups. Additional assessments can be added to the folder as the unit progresses and comments added to each student's checklist.

**Rubrics** are evaluation tools that identify the criteria for evaluation and provide a word description of each level of performance for each criterion. Often the language is complex for students and they can be time consuming to create. Rubrics are best used for summative evaluation.

**Rating scales** are evaluation tools that describe the desired behaviour and then provide a scale for rating current performance. The addition of a comment column provides a place to record evidence for the rating. Rating scales can be based on frequency, consistency, independence or quality of performance. They are generally not translated into percentage scores and therefore can have three or more levels depending on how much specificity is desired.



### Assess & Reflect

Assessment tips are provided throughout the teacher notes in each learning sequence. These tips also include suggestions for encouraging students to reflect on their own learning.

Rating scales are useful because they are less complex than rubrics. They can be used for formative assessment to help students (or peers) evaluate work in progress and identify areas for improvement. Rating scales are also useful for providing evidence of a wide range of process skills.

Rating scales and rubrics can be used together to create a broader picture of student performance. For example, students can use a rating scale to reflect on their contribution to a product as well as to rate their use of process skills. Teachers can use the evidence provided by the students on the rating scale as well as their own observations to assign rubric scores for the various criteria.



## Engaging with Concepts & Vocabulary

### Activities To Reinforce Understandings

Students are encouraged to develop understandings of key terms and concepts in activities and student resources. The following activities can be used to support a better understanding and more effective application of social studies concepts.

- Keep track of words, terms, ideas and concepts. When students find them in resources and sources of information, highlight or underline them or record a definition.
- Create an illustrated glossary. Record the definition with an illustration that will help students remember it. Students may be asked to maintain their glossaries individually, with a partner, or with a small group of classmates.
- Create a “What I Learned That I Did Not Know Before” booklet. In this booklet, record the definitions of new words, terms, ideas and concepts.
- Make a word splash or word bank list of words, terms, ideas and concepts to help students keep track of words associated with the electoral process and political participation. Encourage students to use these words when they complete assignments or projects.
- Have students create a word wall in the classroom using word art to display, describe or define key concepts and vocabulary.
- Encourage students to use vocabulary and concepts to create analogies, acrostic poems, word pictures, antonyms and synonyms.
- Create a mind map of words, terms, ideas and concepts that are related to each other.
- Use the glossary definitions to create a board game or game show similar to Jeopardy.

### Glossary

The following pages provide glossary terms and concepts that are highlighted throughout the student resources. The terms are defined or described in the context and sequence of the content that is presented in student resources. Students can be encouraged to use other sources, such as dictionaries, Internet glossaries and classroom resources to expand their understandings of these terms and concepts.

### Key Curriculum Concepts\*

**Representative democracy** Political system whereby citizens elect their representatives to govern and make decisions on their behalf.

**Democracy** Political system in which citizens have a voice in decision-making (government of the people, for the people, by the people).

**Electorate** Group of qualified voters.

**MLA** Elected member of the legislative assembly, representing a specific constituency within the province.

**Provincial government** The level of government whose constitutional mandate is to make decisions and pass legislation relating to provincial issues and services.

\*These terms and concepts are defined in the *Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies* (2007), Grade 6 (p. 10).

## *Learning Sequence 1*

**Democracy** happens when citizens have a say in decisions and in their **governance**, or the ways that they organize themselves in order to make decisions or accomplish goals.

In some Aboriginal models of **consensus decision-making**, decisions are arrived at with the direct participation of everyone.

Canada is a **representative democracy**, which means that every citizen has the power to express their opinions and make decisions. It means that **residents**, people who live in Canada whether or not they are citizens, have many of the same rights as citizens.

The government is run by a **legislature**, or a group of people who are elected by citizens to represent them and form the government in the province.

This system of representative democracy is based on **principles**, or important values and ideas, which are hundreds of years old.

The government elected for Canada as a whole governs through the **parliament**.

In a **direct democracy**, citizens make decisions in person, without going through representatives.

An important decision is made by holding a **referendum**, a vote in which every citizen can participate.

Today's parliament developed in what is now Great Britain. It came into being because **monarchs**, rulers who were kings and queens, needed more and more money to fight wars and run the kingdom.

All decisions of the Iroquois Confederacy had to be **unanimous**, or agreed to by everyone.

The government in Canada can be described as a **responsible government**. This means that elected representatives are responsible to the people who elect them.

In the Alberta Legislature today, the monarch is represented by the **Lieutenant Governor**, who is the formal head of state.

The power and authority to make laws is given to the premier and his or her **cabinet**. The cabinet is a group of members of the Legislative Assembly, chosen by the premier, who help make decisions.

To govern, the premier and cabinet must have the support of a majority of elected representatives, or **Members of the Legislative Assembly**. These representatives are also called MLAs. Members of the cabinet are called **ministers**. Ministers propose most of the laws that pass, and they vote on them along with their fellow MLAs. As well, ministers are responsible for administering government ministries and the laws guiding them.

## *Learning Sequence 2*

**Legislation**, which is law passed by government, that regulated the minimum working age was passed to ensure that children went to school instead of to work.

**Civil rights** include rights that citizens are entitled to – for example, freedom of speech, religion, equality and security.

Each provincial government decides how to carry out these responsibilities. This is often done by establishing **government ministries**, or departments, that look after each area of responsibility.

The provincial government also takes responsibility for its environment and resources. It has to look after its own **finances**, like taxes and budgets.

MLAs also deal with **special-interest groups**, which are organizations and groups that promote specific views and actions.

MLAs gather information from as many constituents as possible. They then discuss the issue in private meetings, called **caucus meetings**, with other MLAs from the same party.

**Cabinet ministers** are MLAs who are in charge of specific government ministries and can influence ministry policies and programs.

**Private government members** are often called **backbenchers** because in the Legislative Assembly they sit in the back rows, behind the cabinet ministers. However, the correct term for any member who is not in cabinet is “private member.” A private government member is an MLA who belongs to the governing party.

Private members sit on cabinet policy committees and can sponsor **government bills**, proposals for laws that will be discussed and debated before becoming law.

In addition, private government members, as well as opposition members, introduce their own bills. These are called **private bills**.

The role of an **opposition party** is to analyze and critique government activity, propose improvements and present itself to the public as an alternative to the party in power. Opposition parties often assign some of their MLAs to be critics of specific departments. Together, opposition critics are called a **shadow cabinet**.

## *Learning Sequence 3*

**Standing committees** of the Assembly include MLAs from all parties represented in the Legislative Assembly.

**Collectively**, or taken all together, election results can send a message to politicians, political parties and the public, letting them know what positions and points of view are supported by the majority.

In Alberta, the **electoral process**, the steps and actions involved in an election, is run by an organization called Elections Alberta.

People can provide different reasons to explain why they vote the way they do. Some vote for a **candidate**, or a person who is running for election, based strictly on individual qualifications. Others look at their vote as a vote for both their candidate and for the political party that candidate represents, unless the candidate is running as an **independent**, a person who is not a member of a specific political party.

Voters who are not on the List of Electors must provide identification to prove who they are. They register at the **polling station**, the place where they will vote, by completing an oath.

In some areas, Elections Alberta will conduct an **enumeration**, or a door-to-door canvass to register eligible voters.

The **Register of Electors** is used to maintain an accurate and up-to-date list of eligible voters.

The **List of Electors** is used to keep track of who has voted on Polling Day and ensure that people vote only once.

When a group of people have similar ideas about the major issues affecting people in a democratic society, they may form a **political party**.

Each party **nominates**, or selects, one candidate to run in each electoral division.

Another voting system used by some democracies is **proportional representation**, in which parties win seats according to the percentage of the total votes cast in their favour.

In Canadian elections, winners are chosen through the **single-member plurality** system, or “first-past-the-post.” In other words, the candidate winning the most votes in an electoral division is the winner, even if he or she received less than 50% of the “**popular vote**,” which is the total number of votes cast.

Political parties and candidates use many strategies to **campaign**, or promote their views and ability to represent the people who live and work in their electoral division.

One of the best ways to find out about a party’s election **platform**, or their views, principles and policies, is when candidates of one electoral division get together to talk about issues and answer voters’ questions.

In order to vote, each eligible voter must **register**, or identify themselves, by adding their name to the List of Electors. Voting takes place in **polling places** within each **polling subdivision**.

## ■ Introduction & Class Action Project

This introductory section is designed to develop and support **selected** learning outcomes from the Grade 6 Social Studies Program of Studies.

### ■ Advance Planning

- Start to collect media sources that students can use to explore examples related to democracy, provincial government and participation in the community.
- Have students use a notebook, binder or file folder to start a **learning log**. Encourage students to use their learning logs to reflect on what they have learned about democracy, elections and social participation.
- Create a portfolio for the **class action project** students will start in this introductory section.
- Set aside a space to display posters with inquiry questions and strategies for participation in communities and with government.



### Learning Log

Throughout the student resources, **learning log** questions are provided that encourage students to make personal connections and reflect on their learning.

*An introduction to participation and the impact of taking action*

## Make It Matter



Students decide on a class project to implement.

- **Plan It** (pp. 146-147)

## MAKE IT MATTER

*What are the best ways to participate and bring about change?*

This section introduces an overarching issue to students. The overarching issue provides a context for the entire inquiry presented in this resource. Students explore examples of ways that youth can take a stand on issues and questions that are of importance to them. They decide on a **class action project** that they believe would make a difference in their school or community.



### Prepare

#### Student Resource

- Student Resource I-1: Make It Matter (pp. 23-26)

#### Graphic Organizer

- Triple T-Chart (p. 139)

#### *Build the Vote! An Election Simulation*

- A **Ballot Template** is provided in this resource.



**2 to 4 45-minute class periods**

# MAKE IT MATTER

*What are the best ways to participate and bring about change?*

## Curriculum Connections

Inquiry Context	Learning Outcomes
<p><b>What are the best ways to participate and bring about change?</b></p> <p>An introduction to participation and the impact of taking action</p>	<p><b>6.1.1</b> recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)</li> <li>value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.1</b> develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>critically evaluate ideas, information and positions</li> <li>re-evaluate personal opinions to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue</li> <li>generate original ideas and strategies in individual and group activities</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.4</b> demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>propose and apply new ideas, strategies and options, supported with facts and reasons, to contribute to decision making and problem solving</li> <li>consider multiple perspectives when dealing with issues, decision making and problem solving</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.5</b> demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrate the skills of compromise to reach group consensus</li> <li>work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal</li> <li>record group brainstorming, planning and sharing of ideas by using technology</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.6</b> develop age-appropriate behaviour for social involvement as responsible citizens contributing to their community, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrate commitment to the well-being of their community by drawing attention to situations of injustice where action is needed</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.7</b> apply the research process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formulate questions to be answered through the research process</li> <li>formulate new questions as research progresses</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.8</b> demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>express opinions and present perspectives and information in a variety of forms such as oral or written presentations, speeches or debates</li> <li>express reasons for their ideas and opinions, in oral or written form</li> <li>listen to others to understand their perspectives</li> </ul>

**C** Citizenship

**LPP** The Land: Places and People

**CC** Culture and Community

**I** Identity

**GC** Global Connections

**PADM** Power, Authority and Decision Making

**ER** Economics and Resources

**TCC** Time, Continuity and Change

Selected curriculum outcomes from Alberta's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Program of Studies are infused throughout the Social Studies Program of Studies and are indicated by this symbol ►.



## Assess & Reflect

The learning outcomes in this introductory section are developed in more depth in the learning sequences. It is recommended that students be assessed as they move further into their inquiries, rather than completing formal assessments at this stage.

## MAKE IT MATTER

*What are the best ways to participate and bring about change?*

### Teaching and Learning Activities

#### ① Make It Matter

The belief that one person can take action and bring about change is an important aspect of participatory democracy. Students should be encouraged to consider ways that their actions can result in change and make a difference. They can then be encouraged to consider how participating as a voter is also a means of bringing about change.

- Provide students with a graphic organizer such as a **Triple T-Chart (p. 139)**. Work with the class to make a list of actions they have taken in the past that have resulted in positive change. Why were these actions successful? Record actions, effects and reasons in the Triple T-Chart.

Actions	Effects	Reasons for Success

- Ask students to also share examples of other individuals they know who have affected change. Add these examples to the class Triple T-Chart. Discuss how taking action and affecting change can make a person feel. To what extent does taking action result in feelings of empowerment and contribution?
- Provide students with **Student Resource I-1: Make It Matter (pp. 23-26)**. Read the resource with a partner and brainstorm a list of changes they would like to be able to bring about in the classroom, the school or their community.
- Work with students to discuss and analyze their initial ideas, using questions such as the following:
  - ➔ What types of change are possible in the short term?
  - ➔ What types of changes would take longer?
  - ➔ What changes involve personal or group actions?
  - ➔ What changes have challenges associated with them? What are these challenges?

The T-Chart graphic organizer can also be used to have students analyze each change and potential effects and challenges. *(Encourage students to consider the criteria that could be used to evaluate how successful, challenging, realistic or unrealistic some changes may be. Consider why some ideas for change can be challenging or unrealistic and how criteria should be applied in deciding what types of actions will be effective in bringing about change.)*

Share



One method that can be used to make a decision about a class project is a classroom vote. Once ideas are prioritized, a ballot can be filled out with the top choices. A **Ballot Template** is provided in *Build the Vote! An Election Simulation*. This activity also provides an opportunity to introduce the electoral system to students. Provide a basic introduction to how voting works and the idea that decisions are made by what the majority decides.



- Work with the class to prioritize their ideas for change and action. Make a decision about how to select a project that the class can work on throughout the inquiry in this resource.
- Ask students to identify examples of injustices or challenges in the school or community. Use a consensus building process to decide on a project to work together on as a class that can address an injustice or challenge. The class action projects should address an area of concern relevant to students in their own schools or communities, but may include issues such as:
  - An environmental problem or challenge in the community
  - Incidents of bullying in the school or community
  - Rules that may be perceived to be unfair, such as curfews
  - Banning of junk food or bottled water in schools
  - New developments in the community
  - Community awareness of poverty or homelessness
  - Health or fitness issues.

Although these issues are not associated directly with the electoral process, they provide a valuable connection to the idea of participation in a democracy and can often be related to, or affected by, governments and legislation. As students learn about government and democracy through the learning sequences, they should be encouraged to consider the connections between different forms of social participation, including voting.

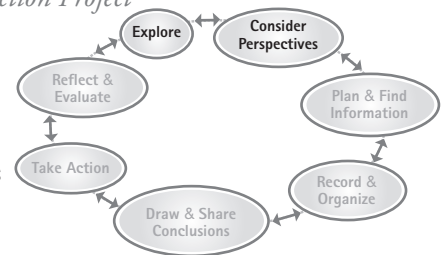
- Establish project groups of four or five students and negotiate each group's responsibilities with the class. Discuss how to ensure that the project is doable within the time frame established to work on it. There are a variety of approaches that can be used to establish group responsibilities:
  - Ask each group to complete the same tasks and then compare and combine results as a class before taking the next step. Make the decision to move forward with the project as a class.
  - Establish separate responsibilities for each group. For example, have each group explore different issues, perspectives or opinions associated with the project.
- Ask students to make a commitment to work on the class action project throughout this unit of study. Discuss ideas for continuing the project throughout the year, or brainstorm examples of additional strategies that can be used to continue involvement in the project. Establish realistic goals and desired results for the project with the class.
- The ***Make It Matter*** icon at the end of each learning sequence in this resource provides additional suggestions for implementing the class action project throughout this unit. However, the scope of the project may necessitate its continuance throughout the school year. The project can be implemented by:
  - Allocating one class period every week to have students work on the class action project.

- Dedicating two or three classes every few weeks to complete a stage in the class action project. These stages can correlate with the suggestions and planning templates referenced in Learning Sequences 1 to 4.
  - Establishing a schedule for project groups to work on the class action project once every one or two weeks during lunch or after school. Each group may be asked to work on the project on a rotating basis. This may also necessitate making participation in the class action project an optional component of this unit.
- Create a class poster or allocate bulletin board space to identify and describe the challenge or injustice that students are taking on as their class action project. Students can be asked to add mini progress reports to the poster or bulletin board to update their progress and results.



### Make It Matter - *Class Action Project*

- Invite each project group to use **Plan It (pp. 146-147)** to organize and create a project plan. This student resource asks students to describe the project goals and group responsibilities.





## ■ I-1 MAKE IT MATTER

What matters to you? Many people may answer this question by talking about their family and friends, their health and well being or feeling good about themselves.

Have you ever thought about what matters to you as a citizen? When people think about what matters, they may think about what they can do to participate as citizens. Often, elections and voting are associated with citizen participation. Elections, and the right to vote, are important aspects of democracy. The results of elections can affect many aspects of your life, even though you are not old enough to vote. You'll explore why and how in your inquiries this year.

However, many young people who are not yet old enough to vote decide to participate in other ways. They act on what matters to them. The following news article excerpts show how some young people decided to get involved in an issue that was important to them – bullying.

1 What are the best ways to participate and bring about change?



☞ **TORONTO** (Sun Media) - She's only 12 years old but Hazel Visitacion is doing her best to make a difference in her violence-plagued North York neighbourhood — one recess at a time.

The girl, a student at St. Francis de Sales Catholic School and one of the bright lights in the Jane-Finch corridor, has been involved with her school's Crime Stoppers program for a couple of years and was honoured as the Toronto Crime Stoppers Student of the Year last week for her efforts.

"I first got involved in Crime Stoppers because I was interested in stopping bullying at my school," Hazel said in a heart-warming speech last Tuesday at the 11th Annual Chief of Police Dinner. "On many occasions I have been bullied by my fellow students and have also witnessed various types of bullying."

Sitting down with the Sunday Sun recently, the youngster shared her experience of being abused at the hands of her peers and how she chose to deal with it by turning a negative into a positive.

"In Grade 4, people were making fun of me ... It made me feel very sad," Hazel said of how fellow students attacked her because of her ethnicity.

The comments made her feel ashamed and she thought about returning to the Philippines, from where her family immigrated about six years ago. But rather than give up, she decided to get on board with Crime Stoppers and help others.

"Bullying hurts and bullying is wrong," Hazel said passionately. "I didn't want anybody (else) to feel how I felt, so I decided to be one of the Crime Stoppers to prevent that from happening. I feel very proud of myself because now I'm helping other people with their problems." ☞

Doucette, Chris. *Student making a difference* (May 20, 2007). Sun Media: <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2007/05/20/4194810-sun.html>.

“**PICKERING** -- From shirts to scarves to sticky notes taped to their shoes, students at a Pickering elementary school went pink on Wednesday as part of an anti-bullying campaign that’s spreading around the world.

The students at Altona Forest Public School were inspired by what happened this September at Central Kings Rural High School in Nova Scotia.

When a Grade 9 student was bullied because he wore a pink shirt to school, Grade 12s David Shepherd and Travis Price at the Nova Scotia school decided to do something about it. They went out and bought 50 pink shirts and tank tops to pass out to their classmates and messaged their friends, asking them to wear pink to school the next day. Hundreds of students showed up wearing pink, about half the school, sending a strong anti-bullying message and creating what the boys dubbed a sea of pink.

Their action drew international media attention and many schools, like Altona Forest, decided to hold their own pink days.

“It’s so important to bring real life, current events into the classroom. This is something that happened this year in Canada,” said Grade 6 teacher Paula Mbonda whose class organized the theme day.

“We’re trying to stop bullying at our school and we’re going to be like the kids in Nova Scotia,” said Grade 6 student Nick Taskas, adding the pink shirt he was wearing was his own and he has no problems wearing it to school.

Classmate Keziah Scott said she tries to stop bullying when she sees it.

“We were hoping it would carry through the rest of the year because I personally see a lot of bullying going on outside and in the play yard,” she said.

The Grade 6s made a fundraiser out of it for their class trip by asking students to donate \$1 if they wore pink. The students spread the word in a variety of ways including announcements, personalized labels for everyone’s agenda reminding them of the event and a class blog. ”

*Sea of pink spreads to Pickering: Students take a stand against bullying*  
(December 01, 2007). Durham: [newsdurhamregion.com](http://newsdurhamregion.com) website.  
<http://newsdurhamregion.com/news/Education/article/90040>.

## Weblink



## Find Out More



Find out about other young people who acted on something that mattered to them. Visit these websites:

The Ladybug Foundation  
[www.ladybugfoundation.ca](http://www.ladybugfoundation.ca)

Free the Children  
[www.freethechildren.com](http://www.freethechildren.com)



## What about you?

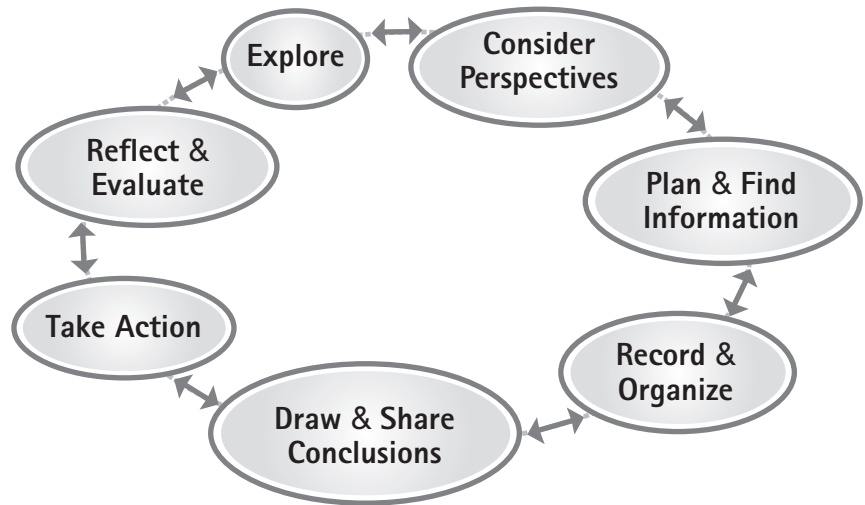
What matters to you? Brainstorm ideas that represent the people, places, ideas, issues or events that are important to you.

What do you think needs changing? Make another list of your ideas.

What do you think you could do about the things that need changing?



Making a decision to take action involves the inquiry process. As you plan how you can "make it matter" in your home, school or community, you will use a model for inquiry. What do each of the steps of the inquiry model involve?



Explore

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Consider Perspectives

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Plan and Find Information

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Record and Organize

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---

Draw and Share Conclusions

---

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Take Action

---

---

Reflect and Evaluate

---

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## ■ Learning Sequences

The four activity sequences that follow are designed to develop and support **selected** learning outcomes from the Grade 6 Social Studies Program of Studies. **Select from those activities that best meet the needs of your students.**

### ● Advance Planning

- Start to collect media sources that students can use to explore examples related to democracy, provincial government and participation in the community.
- Identify websites that students can use to research information about democracy, elections, voting and social action.
- Set aside bulletin board space for group projects that students complete in this learning sequence.
- Contact Elections Alberta through the contact information on this page to request the participation of a Returning Officer. Invite him or her to visit the class to view student work at the end of the learning sequence activities.



### Share

The *Building Future Voters Returning Officers' Resource* encourages Returning Officers to interact and work with students in the classroom. Involving Returning Officers with your students provides an authentic context in which students can develop research and inquiry skills and share learning.

#### **Elections Alberta**

Suite 100, 11510 Kingsway NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T5G 2Y5

#### Office Hours:

Monday through Friday

8:15 a.m. to 12 noon;

1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tel: 780-427-7191

Fax: 780-422-2900

Other locations in the province can call toll free by dialing 310-0000 then dial 780-427-7191

#### Online Booking Form:

[www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca),

under the *Education* tab.

*An introduction to the concepts of democracy, representation and participation*

## Make It Matter



Students work with their project groups to research and explore information that will support their **class action project**.

- **Get Informed** (pp. 148-149)

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 1

### *Why participate in a democracy?*

Students can experience challenges as they develop understandings of the concepts of democracy and representation. This learning sequence encourages students to explore what democracy means. It examines similarities and differences between direct and representative democracy, and asks students to consider the extent to which the principles of democracy encourage participation and involvement.



### Prepare

#### Student Resources

- Student Resource 1-1: Messages About Democracy (pp. 41-43)
- Student Resource 1-2: Direct or Representative? (pp. 44-45)
- Student Resource 1-3: Development of Democracy (pp. 46-49)
- Student Resource 1-4: Why Participate? (p. 50)

#### Graphic Organizers

- Wheel Chart (p. 135)
- KWHL Chart (p. 136)
- Storyboard (p. 137)
- Timeline (p. 138)



### 6 to 10 45-minute class periods



**Teacher Background 1** (pp. 108-109) provides background information that you may find useful in supporting students' learning.



# LEARNING SEQUENCE 1

## Why participate in a democracy?

### Curriculum Connections

Inquiry Context	Learning Outcomes
<p><b>Why participate in a democracy?</b></p> <p>An introduction to the concepts of democracy, representation and participation</p>	<p><b>6.1.1</b> recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)</li> <li>• (3) recognize the influence of historical events and legislation on democratic decision making in Canada (TCC, PADM)</li> <li>• (4) value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)</li> </ul> <p><b>6.1.2</b> demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) What is democracy (i.e., justice, equity, freedoms, representation)? (C, PADM)</li> <li>• (2) What are the similarities and differences between direct and representative democracy? (PADM)</li> <li>• (3) What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a representative democracy? (C, PADM)</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.1</b> develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (2) critically evaluate ideas, information and positions</li> <li>• (3) re-evaluate personal opinions to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue</li> <li>• (4) generate original ideas and strategies in individual and group activities</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.2</b> develop skills of historical thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (3) explain the historical contexts of key events of a given time period</li> <li>• (4) use examples of events to describe cause and effect and change over time</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.4</b> demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) propose and apply new ideas, strategies and options, supported with facts and reasons, to contribute to decision making and problem solving</li> <li>• (2) consider multiple perspectives when dealing with issues, decision making and problem solving</li> <li>➤ (7) use graphic organizers, such as mind mapping/webbing, flow charting and outlining, to present connections among ideas and information in a problem-solving environment</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.5</b> demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) demonstrate the skills of compromise to reach group consensus</li> <li>• (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.7</b> apply the research process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (2) formulate questions to be answered through the research process</li> <li>• (4) draw and support conclusions based on information gathered to answer a research question</li> <li>• (6) formulate new questions as research progresses</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.8</b> demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) express opinions and present perspectives and information in a variety of forms such as oral or written presentations, speeches or debates</li> <li>• (2) express reasons for their ideas and opinions, in oral or written form</li> <li>• (5) listen to others to understand their perspectives</li> </ul>

**C** Citizenship

**LPP** The Land: Places and People

**CC** Culture and Community

**I** Identity

**GC** Global Connections

**PADM** Power, Authority and Decision Making

**ER** Economics and Resources

**TCC** Time, Continuity and Change

Selected curriculum outcomes from Alberta's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Program of Studies are infused throughout the Social Studies Program of Studies and are indicated by this symbol ➤.

# LEARNING SEQUENCE 1

*Why participate in a democracy?*



## Checklist

Criteria	Yes	Somewhat	Not Yet
<b>Students provide evidence of their learning as they:</b>			
Listen and respond respectfully to understand democratic principles (6.1.1.1; 6.1.1.3; 6.1.1.4; 6.1.2.3; 6.S.8.5)			
Provide evidence of knowledge of democratic principles, including rights and responsibilities (6.1.2.1; 6.1.2.2; 6.1.2.3; 6.S.4.2; 6.S.8.2)			
Develop inquiry questions (6.S.7.2; 6.S.7.6)			
Examine, evaluate and assess sources of information (6.S.1.2; 6.S.7.2; 6.S.7.4)			
Discuss and share original ideas with others (6.S.1.4, 6.S.4.1; 6.S.8.1)			
Express and support opinions (6.S.1.3, 6.S.8.2)			
Describe importance and identify effects of significant events (6.S.2.3; 6.S.2.4)			
Use graphic organizers to make connections between ideas (6.S.4.7)			
Communicate information (6.S.8.1)			
Collaborate and cooperate with group members (6.S.5.1; 6.S.5.2)			



# LEARNING SEQUENCE 1

*Why participate in a democracy?*



## Rubric

Level Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
<b>Provides evidence of knowledge of democratic principles, including rights and responsibilities</b> (6.1.2.1; 6.1.2.2; 6.1.2.3; 6.S.4.2; 6.S.8.2)	Identifies and shares <b>significant</b> and <b>thorough</b> evidence of democracy as it is acted upon by individuals.	Identifies and shares <b>specific</b> and <b>detailed</b> evidence of democracy as it is acted upon by individuals.	Identifies and shares <b>general</b> and <b>partial</b> evidence of democracy as it is acted upon by individuals.	Identifies and shares <b>vague</b> and <b>sketchy</b> evidence of democracy as it is acted upon by individuals.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
<b>Examines, evaluates and assesses sources of information</b> (6.S.1.2; 6.S.7.2; 6.S.7.4)	Provides an <b>insightful</b> evaluation of sources.	Provides a <b>thoughtful</b> evaluation of sources.	Provides a <b>basic</b> evaluation of sources.	Provides an <b>ineffective</b> evaluation of sources.	
<b>Expresses and supports opinions</b> (6.S.1.3, 6.S.8.2)	Provides <b>compelling</b> support for opinion.	Provides <b>convincing</b> support for opinion.	Provides <b>simplistic</b> support for opinion.	Provides <b>minimal</b> support for opinion.	
<b>Communicates information</b> (6.S.8.1)	Communicates information in an <b>effective</b> manner to <b>engage</b> the audience.	Communicates information in a <b>purposeful</b> manner to <b>interest</b> the audience.	Communicates information in a <b>straightforward</b> manner that <b>generally holds the attention</b> of the audience.	Communicates information in an <b>ineffective</b> manner that <b>does not sustain the attention</b> of the audience.	

\* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 1

### *Why participate in a democracy?*

#### Teaching and Learning Activities

##### 1 Messages about Democracy

Democracy is an abstract concept that is shaped by different perspectives and often affected by individuals' sense of belonging and place.

- Write the inquiry question, *Why participate in a democracy?* on the board. Invite students to brainstorm and share their initial responses to this question. Ideas related to the concept of democracy are discussed in **Student Resource 1-1: Messages about Democracy (pp. 41-43)**. Students can also be provided with a graphic organizer such as a **Wheel Chart (p. 135)** to help them organize their ideas. (*If students have not been introduced to the concept of democracy yet, share and discuss ideas related to the following principles, as identified in the Alberta Grade 6 Social Studies Program of Studies (2007):*

- ➔ *In a democracy, all citizens have a say in decision-making.*
- ➔ *People living in a democracy have the freedom to make choices and express opinions.*
- ➔ *In a democracy, there are equal rights and responsibilities for everyone.*
- ➔ *A democracy has a justice system that applies to everyone.*
- ➔ *In a democracy, the government is accountable, or responsible, to the people.*

*If you present the statements to students, encourage them to underline terms that are important within each of the sentences or phrases and discuss their meanings. Terms can be added to an illustrated glossary, or word wall.)*

- Once students have brainstormed their ideas, discuss and organize ideas into categories as a class. Display the categories and related ideas in the classroom. (*Students may come up with categories such as elections, leadership, politics, government, equality, freedom, rights, etc.*)
- Have groups use their categories and ideas to find evidence and examples that represent different understandings and meanings of democracy. Explore and find examples from sources such as the media, music lyrics, literature, the school environment, evidence or examples from the community and artifacts and stories related to personal experiences.
- Ask students to work with their project groups to create a **graffiti wall** about democracy. Share examples of what graffiti includes – shapes, drawings, doodles, symbols, colours, story excerpts, quotations and word labels.
- Create the graffiti wall on a large sheet of poster or chart paper. Combine evidence and examples of democracy and group them around categories that make sense to each group. Use drawings, shapes, symbols, doodles and colours to connect related ideas and examples. Remind groups to ensure that each student has equal representation on the graffiti wall.



#### Differentiate

Students may have already explored the concept of democracy this year in class, or may be introduced to it for the first time in this learning activity.

Have students brainstorm what they understand the concept of democracy to mean:

- Individually in their notebooks
- On sticky notes or index cards
- In small groups or as a class, using chart paper.

Remind students to record all their responses without debating them.



#### Weblink

A **graffiti wall** is a strategy typically used in language arts classrooms and connected with literature studies. To create a graffiti wall, students create a poster or bulletin board space with drawings, shapes, symbols, colours, excerpts, quotations and illustrations, to represent a message. Adapt this strategy for social studies by centering its creation on a key concept, such as evidence of democracy.

A graffiti wall strategy emphasizes a constructivist approach to learning, as students express and negotiate understandings as they construct it. Find out more about this strategy at [www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=208](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=208).

## Did You Know



Graffiti can be a contentious issue in communities today. Many, including the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, have launched campaigns to inform the public of the legal implications of spreading graffiti on public property, even though others consider it to be an art form. Ensure that you discuss appropriate and inappropriate venues for the creation of graffiti. Encourage students to look at the graffiti they create on their personal property – doodles on their binders, posters placed on the inside of lockers or cubbies or blackboards placed in public venues for graffiti creation. Caution students that the creation of graffiti on public property is illegal.

- Have each group present and discuss their graffiti walls and post them around the classroom. The graffiti walls can be continuously expanded as students explore and research democracy and voting.



## Integrate

Graffiti walls can provide an opportunity to experiment with imagery and exaggeration, as well as discuss messages and modes of communication that represent popular culture.

### Language Arts

**2.2 Respond to Texts:** experiment with sentence patterns, imagery and exaggeration to create mood and mental images

**5.1 Respect Others and Strengthen Community:** identify ways in which oral, print and other media texts from diverse cultures and communities explore similar ideas



## Assess & Reflect

Ask students to individually reflect on the creation of their graffiti walls. Respond to questions such as:

- What did you learn about democracy from the ideas of others?
- What ideas about living in a democracy are most important to you? How are these ideas reflected in your graffiti wall?

These reflection questions can also be used for a summative assessment of students' understandings of the concept of democracy. Ask students to use their reflection to construct a paragraph focused on "multiple meanings of democracy."

## 2 Direct or Representative?

As students discuss understandings of democracy, they may bring up ideas related to the concepts of representation, fairness, equity and impartiality. These concepts are central to representative and direct democracies as well as the important role of the electoral process in a representative democracy.

- Provide students with **Student Resource 1-2: Direct or Representative?** (pp. 44-45), which asks students to compare the concepts of direct and representative democracy.
- Explore the concepts of direct and representative democracy further in a class discussion, using the following questions from the student resource:
  - ➔ What evidence of representative democracy do you see around you? What evidence of direct democracy do you see? (*Ask students to think about daily life in their homes, schools and community – what examples prove that we live in a democracy?*)
  - ➔ Why do we have a representative democracy instead of a direct democracy? Can you think of examples of places where direct democracies exist? (*Use this question to reinforce understandings of the differences between direct and representative democracies. Students may use the example of class or community meetings, where everyone has a direct say in making a decision. They may also refer to some Aboriginal models of consensus decision-making, in which decisions are arrived at with the direct participation of everyone.*)
  - ➔ What characteristics and values do you think are most important for a representative democracy to exist? (*Traditionally, principles such as free elections, universal voting rights, freedoms, equal rights, fairness and equity in administering the law are considered essential for representative democracy to exist.*)
  - ➔ Why are elections important in a representative democracy? Are they important in a direct democracy? (*Consider the importance of the electoral process in selecting representatives who make decisions on behalf of citizens. In a direct democracy, everyone participates in decision-making.*)
  - ➔ Who do you think should benefit from democracy? Why? (*Students may be encouraged to consider the difference between citizens and residents. Only citizens have the right to vote, but all residents are affected by decisions made by representatives. The concept of residency, however, is also important to voter eligibility in a representative democracy. Voter eligibility is usually determined by age, citizenship and residency.*)
- The student resource also asks students to work with a small group to develop a one-minute role play or a one-page cartoon strip that shares what a principle of democracy looks like in a representative democracy and a direct democracy. Provide each group with a graphic organizer such as the **Storyboard** (p. 137) to plan and create their role plays or comic strips. Provide a limited amount of time to create the role play or cartoon strip. Ask each group to share with another group or with the class.



## Did You Know

In a **representative democracy**, citizens elect representatives who form a government and make decisions on their behalf. In a **direct democracy**, citizens make decisions in person, without going through representatives. This is similar to what happens in a town hall meeting, where anyone from the town can come to the meeting and vote on decisions that are being made.



## Differentiate

Initial discussion questions can be presented to students in a number of ways:

- A **think-pair-share** strategy asks students to think individually about their response, share with a partner, and then discuss with a small group or the whole class.
- A **KWHL Chart** (What I Know; What I Want to Know; How I Will Find Out; What I Learned) provides students with the opportunity to identify prior knowledge and understandings, questions they have, how they could research those questions and later, reflect on what they have learned. Use the graphic organizer for a **KWHL Chart** (p. 136).
- Each question can be placed on a sheet of chart paper and posted in the classroom. Students, in pairs or small groups, can visit each chart and record written responses and ideas below each question. The responses should then be discussed as a class.



## Assess & Reflect

Use a simple checklist to assess students' demonstrations of their understanding of the difference between direct and representative democracies.

Use criteria such as the following to assess understanding:

- Able to describe the characteristics of each concept
- Able to compare by describing the differences between the concepts.

Does this student demonstrate understanding of...	Yes	Somewhat	Not Yet
Direct democracy?			
Representative democracy?			



### 3 Development of Democracy

Encouraging students to consider who democracy serves, and who can participate, is an important aspect of understanding the connections between democracy, participatory citizenship and the electoral process. A brief historical perspective on the development of democracy and voting rights and privileges encourages appreciation of the value of participation.

- Discuss the following questions with students:
  - ➔ How is voting a way to participate in democracy?
  - ➔ Who can vote? Who cannot?
  - ➔ Do you think it has always been this way? Why or why not?
  - ➔ How would you define the “right to vote?” What challenges and successes do you know about that individuals and groups experienced in obtaining the right to vote? *(Encourage students to review what they have learned previously about historical events, people and places that relate to the development of democracy in Alberta and Canada, such as the fight for the right to vote by women’s groups like the Famous 5, the importance of Confederation and the influence of the British, French and Aboriginal peoples on the ways Canadians make decisions as a society. This historical perspective is something that students will have learned in Grade 4 and 5 Social Studies. The purpose of this discussion question is to tie into students’ prior knowledge from previous grade levels. Information relating to historical contexts of the development of rights related to fairness and equity will be provided in the core Grade 6 textbook resource.)*
  - ➔ Do you think there should be any changes to who can vote today, and how they can vote? *(Students may contribute ideas related to changes in the voting age and the use of technology in the process of voting.)*
  - ➔ Why are only citizens allowed to vote? How do all residents, citizens or not, benefit from democracy?
- Invite students to explore the information on **Student Resource 1-3: Development of Democracy (pp. 46-49)**. If Internet access is available, work with partners or small groups to find information about events that contributed to the development of democratic processes, such as the right to vote.
- Ask students to create a **graphic timeline** that identifies what they consider to be the five most important events in the development of democratic processes and voting rights. Students can be provided with a graphic organizer such as the **Timeline (p. 138)**.
- Share timelines or add them to the graffiti walls in the classroom.



### Weblink

Student research on the history of voting rights and democracy can be structured as a **WebQuest**.

Information about creating a WebQuest, as well as examples of WebQuests, can be found on the WebQuest.Org website at <http://webquest.org/index.php>.

A **graphic timeline** can be used to develop understandings of chronology and time-related concepts, as well as skills of sequencing and analysis. A graphic timeline includes visuals as well as text.

An electronic timeline template is accessible at [www.readwritethink.org/materials/timeline/index.html](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/timeline/index.html).



### Assess & Reflect

Use a rating scale such as the one below to assess students’ demonstration of historical thinking skills.

Does this student demonstrate the ability to...	Yes	Somewhat	Not Yet
Describe the importance of significant events?			
Identify effects of events?			

Ask students to individually reflect on the following question:

- What do I appreciate most about the changes that others have worked for?

## Differentiate



Index cards can be used to brainstorm ideas individually, while poster paper can be used for group brainstorming.

Students may be provided with choices in the products they create to respond to the inquiry question. These choices can include products that involve written or visual responses. Explain that students can choose how to construct their responses as long as they are completed on the 11 x 17 paper they have been provided with.

## Share



Have students take digital photographs of their graffiti walls. Consider sharing them in one or more of the following ways:

- Post the photographs, with captions that students write, on a classroom or school website
- Send the photographs, with students' reflections on democracy, to local or community newsletters or newspapers
- Submit the photographs to be shared with other teachers and students on the Elections Alberta website. **Teaching Ideas & Student Work Submission** and **Permission forms (pp. 155-156)** are provided at the end of this resource.
- Invite parents, community members or the Returning Officer to the classroom to view the graffiti walls and explore ideas about democracy with students.

## 4 Inspired by Democracy

Bringing students back to the inquiry question, *Why participate in a democracy?* encourages students to connect the concept of participation with its role in a democracy. It also encourages students to connect the value of the class action project with the broader concept of democracy.

- Invite students to revisit how they have defined and explored the concept of democracy. (*Encourage students to consider how democracy encourages involvement and participation of citizens through the concepts of representation, equality and voice. For example, the opportunities that everyone has to voice opinions, become involved in groups that are trying to bring about change and vote are all important aspects of participation in a democracy.*)
- Revisit the graffiti walls created at the beginning of the learning sequence. Ask each project group to identify the elements in their graffiti walls that represent important aspects of democracy.
- Ask students to brainstorm a list of ways that individuals and groups can participate in a democracy, using either index cards or poster paper. Add the index cards to the graffiti walls or display posters in the classroom.
- Provide each student with **Student Resource 1-4: Why Participate? (p. 50)** and an 11 x 17 paper and have them create a personal poster, collage, storyboard or photo essay to respond to the inquiry question – *Why participate in democracy?* Remind students to use examples from previous group work and research in the creation of their product. Share and discuss the rubric for the final student product.



## Differentiate

Provide students with choices regarding the type of product they create to apply their understandings and to demonstrate learning. Some of these product choices can include the following:

A **personal poster** is used to create a personal response, including visuals and text. The personal poster should be completed individually.

A **collage** is created with a collection of items from different sources. A collage can include excerpts from media sources, photographs, illustrations, drawings, quotations and literature excerpts. It can also include items that students create themselves. Three-dimensional objects can be used in a collage to create a “collage in relief.”

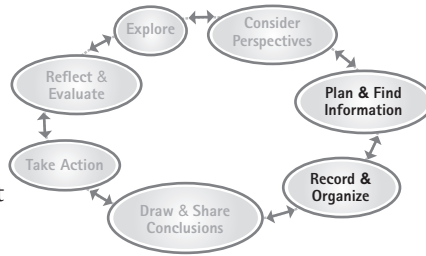
A **storyboard** is a series of drawings, sketches and text that is used to present a sequence of ideas or events. A storyboard is usually created using a series of boxes like a comic strip.

A **photo essay** is a collection of photographs that are presented in order to tell a story or evoke an emotional reaction. A photo essay can provide a written explanation, literature excerpt or quotation or descriptive words and phrases with each photograph. When students are asked to create a photo essay, they can be encouraged to take their own digital photographs and create their essay in electronic form or they can cut and paste photographs they find in different sources.



## Make It Matter - Class Action Project

- Review the project proposal that the class selected for their project. Use **Get Informed** (pp. 148-149) to have groups research:
  - Reasons and examples that support the need for change that they have identified
  - Background information on the issue
  - Reasons and support for possible actions.
- Tell students that they will have opportunities to implement their project over the next few weeks.
- Project groups can be encouraged to explore Internet sites and various media sources, such as newspapers and community publications or watch television news programs to find information that relates to their project. Have them collect these sources in file folders or portfolios. Decide how to best organize information to continue implementing the project.



## Assess & Reflect

The products that students create in this activity provide an opportunity for summative assessment of students' understandings of the concepts of democracy and participation. Although students worked as a group to complete the graffiti walls, they demonstrate their learning in the creation of an individual product. Evaluation should be based on individual student performance and gathered from a variety of sources of evidence to make a judgement of student performance using the descriptors of the **rubric** (p. 32):

- Use evidence from the individual project – the poster, collage, storyboard or photo essay – to assess individual understandings of the concepts of participation and democracy. This project is the final student product for this learning sequence.
- Use observation evidence collected throughout the activities of the learning sequence to consider performance of process skills and group participation.





## 1-1 Messages about Democracy

What do you think about when you hear the word "democracy?" You may think about democracy as a form of government, but it is much more than that. **Democracy** happens when citizens have a say in decisions and in their **governance**, or the ways that they organize themselves in order to make decisions or accomplish goals. There can be evidence of democracy in many different places – in families, schools and communities.

Democracy can mean different things to different people. However, when democracy is defined and described, ideas like the following are often included:

- In a democracy, all citizens have a say in decision-making.
- People living in a democracy have the freedom to make choices and express opinions.
- In a democracy, there are equal rights and responsibilities for everyone.
- A democracy has a justice system that applies to everyone.
- In a democracy, the government is accountable, or responsible, for its actions and to the people.

### What does a dictionary say about democracy?

**a:** government by the people; *especially:* rule of the majority

**b:** a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections

Merriam Webster Dictionary online:

[www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy).



## Why participate in a democracy?



As you read, underline the words or phrases that you think are most important in helping you understand the meaning of "democracy."



# What does the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms say about democracy?

In Canada, democracy is protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The *Charter* protects the rights and freedoms of individuals.

**Garantie des droits et libertés**

**Libertés fondamentales**

**Droits démocratiques**

**Liberté de circulation et d'établissement**

**Garanties juridiques**

**Droits de la minorité**

**Dispositions générales**

**Application de la charte**

**Titre**

**Langues officielles du Canada**

**Droits de la minorité**

**Droits de la minorité dans la langue de la minorité**

**Titre**

**Langues officielles du Canada**

**Droits de la minorité**

**Droits de la minorité dans la langue de la minorité**

**Titre**

## Find Out More

Find and download the *Youth Guide to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* on the John Humphrey Society for Peace and Human Rights website at <http://jhccentre.org>. Go to the link called *Educational Resources*.

All citizens who are 18 years of age or older can vote in federal, provincial or territorial elections.

All citizens who are 18 years of age or older can run for public office.

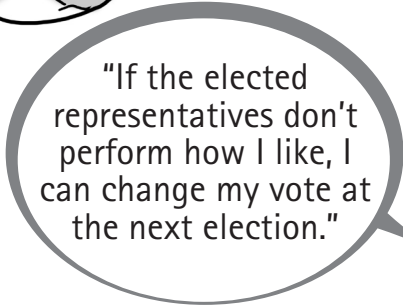
No federal or provincial government can be in power for more than five years without calling an election. This rule ensures that voters can choose their government.

A government must explain its actions to the people by holding a session at least once a year.

What do people in communities say about democracy?



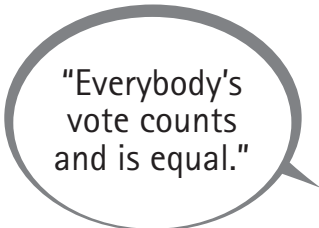
"To me, democracy means voting, and the community having a say in government."



"If the elected representatives don't perform how I like, I can change my vote at the next election."



"I have the right to vote. My voice is heard."



"Everybody's vote counts and is equal."



Learning Log



Add your own definition of democracy below.

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Use the words and phrases that you underlined to describe what democracy means. Use a graphic organizer such as a *Wheel Chart* to describe four important aspects of a democracy. Request this graphic organizer from your teacher.

# 1 Why participate in a democracy?



Freedom of expression is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

## 1-2 Direct or Representative?

Who really makes the decisions in communities, the province and the country? The answer is everyone. Canada is a **representative democracy**, which means that every citizen has the power to express their opinions and make decisions. It means that **residents**, people who live in Canada whether or not they are citizens, have many of the same rights as citizens.

Alberta also has a representative democracy. The government is run by a **legislature**, or a group of people who are elected by citizens to represent them and form the government in the province.

This system of representative democracy is based on **principles**, or important values and ideas, which are hundreds of years old. The representatives elected in provinces govern through the legislature. The government elected for Canada as a whole governs through the **parliament**.

Representative democracies are different from direct democracies. In a **direct democracy**, citizens make decisions in person, without going through representatives. This is similar to what happens in a town hall meeting, where anyone from the town can come to the meeting and vote on decisions that are being made. However, for town meetings to work, people have to attend them and participate.

### Learning Log



How do you think people participate in a representative democracy?

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To what extent do you participate in democracy?

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Which of the statements on the right apply to representative democracy? Which apply to a direct democracy? Which apply to both? Write each statement in the chart where it best applies.

Representative Democracy	Direct Democracy	Both



Work with a small group to create a one-minute role play or create a comic strip using a *Storyboard* graphic organizer. Request this graphic organizer from your teacher.

Your role play or comic strip should show what one of the statements you organized in the chart looks like.

- Everyone is responsible for following the same rules and laws.
- In an election, all eligible voters have the right to vote for a person who will represent them.
- Each class representative meets with the principal to discuss a school-wide decision.
- Everyone votes on a decision to be made for the class.
- People get up and take turns explaining how they will vote on a community issue at a town hall meeting.
- An important decision is made by holding a **referendum**, a vote in which every citizen can participate.
- People have the freedom to express their opinions.
- An election is held to vote for representatives who make decisions on behalf of the people who elect them.
- All people can participate in decisions.

# 1 Why participate in a democracy?



## Did You Know



The word “democracy” comes from two Greek words: “demos,” which means people, and “kratia,” which means rule. The idea that the people should rule themselves was an important part of life in Greece about 2 500 years ago. Ancient Greece was divided into small units called city states. All citizens got together in an Assembly to make decisions and govern the city state.

In today’s democracy, citizens elect people to represent them in the Assembly. They do not attend the Assembly themselves.

But the basic idea that was important in ancient Greece is still the same – that people have common interests which they can promote by making decisions and acting together.

## 1-3 Development of Democracy

What do you know about Canada's history? It is made up of many stories, people and events. Democracy has a history too. There are many events and ideas that have contributed to the way the democratic system in Canada works.

### A British Heritage

The Greeks contributed some of the principles and ideas that are part of the parliamentary system of government, but today's parliament developed in what is now Great Britain. It came into being because **monarchs**, rulers who were kings and queens, needed more and more money to fight wars and run the kingdom. They got this money by taxing people.

Eventually, people refused to pay taxes unless they had a say in how that money would be spent. Over time, the government in Britain gained more control over decision-making and the monarch held less and less power.

### A First Nations Legacy

The Iroquois Confederacy was a sophisticated political and social system. It united the territories of five First Nations in a “symbolic longhouse.”

The people of the Iroquois Confederacy call themselves the Haudenosaunee (ho dee noe sho nee) meaning *People Building a Long House*. These united First Nations influenced some principles of democracy in Canada today.

The original five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy were divided into two groups: the Elders, consisting of the Mohawk, the Onondaga, and the Seneca; and the Younger, the Oneida and the Cayuga.

## Learning Log



How do you think decisions made by the *Haudenosaunee* longhouse compare with decisions made in a democracy?

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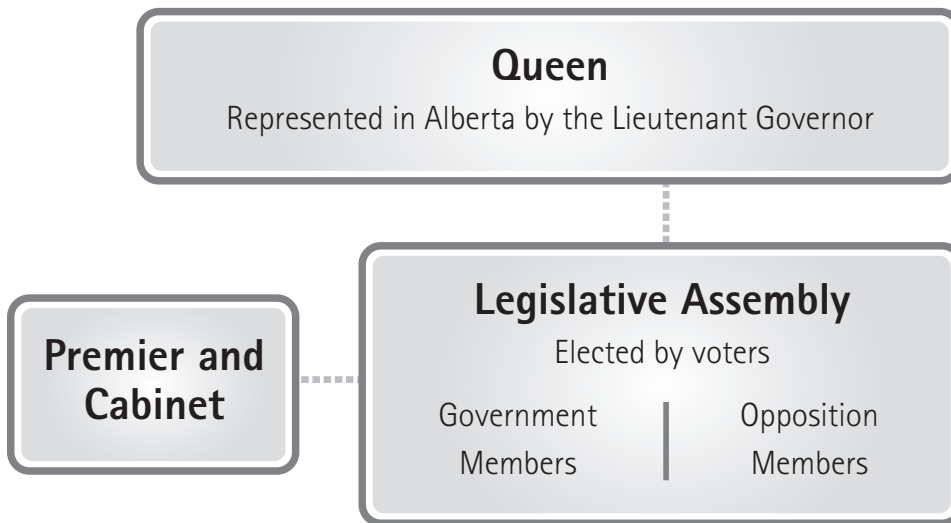
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All decisions of the Confederacy had to be **unanimous**, or agreed to by everyone. Decisions were made when all nations agreed. If they could not agree, they continued to negotiate until an agreement could be made. Decisions were recorded in the belts of wampum, which kept track of important events.

## ■ The Process of Responsible Government

The government in Canada can be described as a **responsible government**. This means that elected representatives are responsible to the people who elect them.

- Canada's federal government has a two-house system that came from Britain. The two houses are called the parliament and the senate.
- The provinces have one house. It is called the legislature. In the Alberta Legislature today, the monarch is represented by the **Lieutenant Governor**, who is the formal head of state.



- The power and authority to make laws is given to the premier and his or her **cabinet**. The premier is the leader of the political party that has the most elected representatives in the entire legislature.
- The cabinet consists of the premier and cabinet members. The cabinet is responsible for putting government policy into practice. The premier is the head of the cabinet and chooses cabinet ministers from the elected members of his or her party.
- To govern, the premier and cabinet must have the support of the majority of elected representatives, or **Members of the Legislative Assembly**. These representatives are also called MLAs. Members of the cabinet are called **ministers**. Ministers propose most of the laws that pass, and they vote on them along with their fellow MLAs. As well, ministers are responsible for administering government ministries and the laws guiding them. If a major policy or law is defeated, the government must resign and call an election.
- Elections are held to elect representatives. Hundreds of years ago, village leaders represented people in the British parliament. However, the right to vote was given to some men only in the 19th and 20th centuries and to women in the 20th century.



### Find Out More

Consult your textbook for more information about the provincial level of government.

- What questions do you have about the provincial level of government? Make a list of three or four questions to answer.
- What can you find out about the responsibilities of the premier, ministers and MLAs?

## Did You Know



Voting has changed a lot since **1867**... Check out some milestones in the history of the vote in Canada!

Did you know that when the first election in Canada was held, the people who were NOT eligible to vote outnumbered those who were eligible to vote?

In **1867**, only 11% of Canada's population was eligible to vote. Today, that percentage is over 68%, almost every Canadian citizen aged 18 and over.

In **1917**, during World War I, the *Wartimes Elections Act* and the *Military Voters Act*, gave all members of the armed forces, both male and female, the right to vote in the 1917 federal election. This included First Nations peoples and individuals under the age of 21.

In **1918**, women were given the right to vote in federal elections.

In **1920**, the position of Chief Electoral Officer of Canada was created. The Chief Electoral Officer was given the responsibility to make sure federal elections across Canada were run according to the laws of the time.

In **1948**, Canadians of Asian origin obtained the right to vote.

In **1874**, people could now vote in private. Paper ballots and voting booths were used for the first time.

In **1885**, the first version of a federal *Election Act* was passed by the federal government. The right to vote was applied differently from one town and one province to the next. The right to vote was based on property ownership.

In **1919**, women obtained the right to run as candidates in federal elections.

In **1920**, First Nations peoples were given the right to vote but they had to give up their treaty rights and status under the *Indian Act*.

In **1921**, Agnes Macphail became the first woman elected as a representative to parliament. She would be the only woman in the federal parliament for the next 14 years.

## Weblink



## Find Out More



Find out more about the development of voting rights in Canada. Explore pictures, videos and news stories on the CBC website at [http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-73-1450/politics\\_economy/voting\\_rights/](http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-73-1450/politics_economy/voting_rights/).

Elections Canada also provides information on the history of the vote at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

▶ In **1950**, Inuit people obtained the right to vote and the right to run as candidates in federal elections.

▶ In **1960**, First Nations people living on reserves were granted the right to vote and the right to run as candidates in federal elections without having to give up their status under the *Indian Act*.

▶ In **1982**, the right to vote and the right to be a candidate in an election were guaranteed in the Constitution by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

▶ In **1992**, special measures, such as blind voting templates, wheelchair access to polls and interpreters, were put into the *Canada Elections Act* to ensure access to vote for people with disabilities.

◀ In **1955**, religious discrimination was removed from federal election laws. Previously, peoples such as the Doukhobors, who objected to war, were not allowed to vote.

◀ In **1970**, the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18.

◀ In **1988**, federally appointed judges and persons with intellectual disabilities obtained the right to vote in federal elections.

◀ In **1993**, a special, or mail-in, ballot was made available for citizens who were away on election day, on vacation or temporarily living outside of their electoral districts.

◀ In **2002**, following a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada, voting rights were given to all inmates, for federal elections. However, this has not yet been adopted in Alberta's *Election Act*.



Build your own timeline. Pick what you think are the five most important events in the history of the vote. Write or draw what is important about each event, placing it in chronological order on a *Timeline* graphic organizer. Request this graphic organizer from your teacher.

# 1 Why participate in a democracy?



## Make It Matter



As you create your project, think about something you can do for your family, friends, school or community.

## 1-4 Why Participate?

What do you think about when you hear the word "democracy?" You may think about democracy as a form of government, but it is much more than government. It involves participation. Why do you think it is important to participate in a democracy?

Share your ideas about democracy and participation with your classmates or other students in your school. Choose from the projects described below, or develop your own idea for a project. Collect sources, personal examples and visuals that show why and how you think it is important to participate.

Your project should:

- Include ideas about the importance of democracy and what it can look like "in action"
- Use a variety of sources and examples, such as print materials, media sources, photographs, interview quotations, personal examples
- Include a paragraph that represents your opinion on why it is important to participate.

With your class, create a display around the question, "Why Participate?"

### Choose a Format:



A **personal poster** includes visuals and text. It should communicate a strong message.



A **collage** is created with a collection of items from different sources. A collage can include excerpts from media sources, photographs, illustrations, drawings, quotations and literature excerpts. It can also include items that you create yourself. Three-dimensional objects can be used in a collage to create a "collage in relief."



A **storyboard** is a series of drawings, sketches and text that is used to present a sequence of ideas or events. A storyboard is usually created using a series of boxes like a comic strip.



A **photo essay** is a collection of photographs that are presented in order to tell a story or create an emotional reaction. A photo essay can provide a written explanation, literature excerpt or quotation or descriptive words and phrases with each photograph. To create your photo essay, you can take digital photographs and create your essay in electronic form or cut and paste photographs you find in different sources.

## Learning Sequences

### LEARNING SEQUENCE 2

#### *Why does provincial government matter?*

The provincial level of government has an effect on many aspects of day-to-day life. A review of provincial government can develop students' understandings of the concept of representative democracy as well as the responsibility of government. Learning Sequence 2 encourages students to explore the concept of responsibility and how responsibilities are carried out through government ministries and departments.



#### Prepare

##### Student Resources

- Student Resource 2-1: Responsibilities? Me? (pp. 61-62)
- Student Resource 2-2: Responsibilities of Provincial Government (pp. 63-69)

##### Graphic Organizer

- Triple T-Chart (p. 139)



5 to 8 45-minute class periods



**Teacher Backgrounder 2** (pp. 110-121) provides background information that you may find useful in supporting students' learning.

*An exploration of the roles of provincial government and representatives in a democracy*



#### Make It Matter

Students work with their project groups to develop strategies for communicating their project goals and for taking action.

- **Communicate and Implement** (pp. 150-151)

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 2

### *Why does provincial government matter?*

#### Curriculum Connections

Inquiry Context	Learning Outcomes
<p><b>Why does provincial government matter?</b></p> <p>An exploration of the roles of provincial government and representatives in a democracy</p>	<p><b>6.1.1</b> recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)</li><li>• (4) value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)</li><li>• (5) value the contributions of elected representatives in the democratic process (PADM)</li></ul> <p><b>6.1.2</b> demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (3) What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a representative democracy? (C, PADM)</li></ul> <p><b>6.1.5</b> analyze the structure and functions of Alberta's provincial government by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) How is the provincial government structured? (PADM)</li><li>• (2) What are the responsibilities of the provincial government (i.e., laws, taxes, services)? (PADM)</li><li>• (4) What are the differences between the responsibilities of a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and a cabinet minister? (PADM)</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.1</b> develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (4) generate original ideas and strategies in individual and group activities</li><li>➤ (5) seek responses to inquiries from various authorities through electronic media</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.3</b> develop skills of geographic thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) construct and interpret various types of maps to broaden understanding of topics being studied (i.e., historical, physical, political maps)</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.4</b> demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) propose and apply new ideas, strategies and options, supported with facts and reasons, to contribute to decision making and problem solving</li><li>• (2) consider multiple perspectives when dealing with issues, decision making and problem solving</li><li>• (3) collaborate with others to devise strategies for dealing with problems and issues</li><li>➤ (7) use graphic organizers, such as mind mapping/webbing, flow charting and outlining, to present connections among ideas and information in a problem-solving environment</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.5</b> demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal</li><li>➤ (3) record group brainstorming, planning and sharing of ideas by using technology</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.7</b> apply the research process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (2) formulate questions to be answered through the research process</li><li>• (3) use graphs, tables, charts and Venn diagrams to interpret information</li><li>• (4) draw and support conclusions based on information gathered to answer a research question</li><li>• (5) include references in an organized manner as part of research</li><li>• (6) formulate new questions as research progresses</li><li>➤ (8) access and retrieve appropriate information from the Internet by using a specific search path or from given uniform resource locators (URLs)</li></ul>



Inquiry Context	Learning Outcomes
	<p><b>6.S.8</b> demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) express opinions and present perspectives and information in a variety of forms such as oral or written presentations, speeches or debates</li> <li>• (2) express reasons for their ideas and opinions, in oral or written form</li> <li>➤ (6) organize information gathered from the Internet, or an electronic source, by selecting and recording the data in logical files or categories</li> <li>➤ (7) communicate effectively through appropriate forms, such as speeches, reports and multimedia presentations, applying information technologies that serve particular audiences and purposes</li> </ul>

**C** Citizenship

**LPP** The Land: Places and People

**CC** Culture and Community

**I** Identity

**GC** Global Connections

**PADM** Power, Authority and Decision Making

**ER** Economics and Resources

**TCC** Time, Continuity and Change

Selected curriculum outcomes from Alberta's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Program of Studies are infused throughout the Social Studies Program of Studies and are indicated by this symbol ➤.



## LEARNING SEQUENCE 2

*Why does provincial government matter?*



### Checklist

Criteria	Yes	Somewhat	Not Yet
<b>Students provide evidence of their learning as they:</b>			
Listen and respond respectfully to understand democratic principles (6.1.1.1; 6.1.1.4; 6.1.2.3; 6.S.4.2)			
Identify responsibilities of provincial government (6.1.1.5; 6.1.5.1; 6.1.5.2; 6.1.5.4)			
Analyze structure and functions of provincial government (6.1.5.1; 6.1.5.2)			
Access and organize information from different sources (6.S.1.5; 6.S.5.3; 6.S.7.8; 6.S.8.6)			
Examine, evaluate and assess sources of information (6.S.4.2; 6.S.7.2; 6.S.7.3; 6.S.7.4; 6.S.7.8)			
Construct maps to provide evidence of understanding of political boundaries (6.S.3.1)			
Develop inquiry questions (6.S.7.2; 6.S.7.6)			
Discuss and share original ideas with others (6.S.1.4; 6.S.4.1)			
Express and support opinions (6.S.4.1; 6.S.7.4)			
Use graphic organizers to make connections between ideas (6.S.4.7)			
Contribute to group processes (6.S.4.3; 6.S.5.2)			
Communicate information (6.S.8.1; 6.S.8.2; 6.S.8.7)			

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 2

*Why does provincial government matter?*

### Rubric



Criteria \ Level	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
<b>Identifies responsibilities of provincial government</b> (6.1.1.4; 6.1.5.1; 6.1.5.2; 6.1.5.4)	Provides <b>specific</b> and <b>purposeful</b> information about responsibilities and importance of provincial government.	Provides <b>relevant</b> information about responsibilities and importance of provincial government.	Provides <b>general</b> information about responsibilities and importance of provincial government.	Provides <b>superficial</b> information about responsibilities and importance of provincial government.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
<b>Analyzes structure and functions of provincial government</b> (6.1.5.1; 6.1.5.2)	Provides an <b>insightful</b> analysis of the structure and function of provincial government.	Provides a <b>functional</b> analysis of the structure and function of provincial government.	Provides a <b>basic</b> analysis of the structure and function of provincial government.	Provides a <b>minimal</b> analysis of the structure and function of provincial government.	
<b>Discusses and shares original ideas with others</b> (6.S.1.4; 6.S.4.1)  <b>Expresses and supports opinions</b> (6.S.4.1; 6.S.7.4)	Shares <b>strongly justified</b> opinions and ideas with others.	Shares <b>well supported</b> opinions and ideas with others.	Shares <b>generally supported</b> opinions and ideas with others.	Shares <b>inconsistently supported</b> opinions and ideas with others.	
<b>Contributes to group processes</b> (6.S.4.3; 6.S.5.2)	Makes an <b>effective</b> contribution to final product and <b>consistently</b> engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes a <b>skilled</b> contribution to final product and <b>frequently</b> engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes a <b>reasonable</b> contribution to final product and <b>occasionally</b> engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Makes <b>inconsistent</b> contributions to final product and <b>seldom</b> engages in appropriate group behaviours.	

\* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

## Differentiate



Use “kidwatching” techniques throughout the activity to monitor students’ work process as well as their progress. If you identify students who need more practice or additional instruction, provide them with one-on-one assistance in later sessions or create opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups so that they can benefit from collaborative work.

## Share



Provide opportunities for students to share their personal storyboards with each other.

## Differentiate



Students can be asked to create their list of routines and experiences individually, with a partner or in a small group.

## Integrate



The lists can be expanded into a story entitled *A Day in the Life of a Grade 6 Student* and include the types of activities, routines and experiences that are influenced by different levels of government.

### Language Arts

**2.4 Create Original Text:** choose life themes encountered in reading, listening and viewing activities, and in own experiences, for creating oral, print and other media texts

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 2

*Why does provincial government matter?*

### Teaching and Learning Activities

#### 1 Responsibilities? Me?

The concept of responsibilities is one that students can be encouraged to explore on a personal level before applying it to research into the responsibilities of government. Students should be encouraged to connect the responsibilities of citizens with the responsibilities of government.

- Invite students to explore the ideas about responsibilities in **Student Resource 2-1: Responsibilities? Me? (pp. 61-62)**. Have students work individually to complete the personal responsibility storyboard.

#### 2 Responsibilities of Provincial Government

Although the three levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – have different responsibilities, they often overlap. An understanding of the responsibilities and roles of the provincial level of government establishes a context in which students are encouraged to see the relevance of government, the electoral process and the choice to vote to their daily lives.

- Ask students to review their understandings of provincial government – what does the provincial level of government do? If students have not already explored levels of government, introduce these levels – federal, provincial and local – using the core textbook resource and other classroom resources.
- Create a list of daily routines and experiences that are affected by provincial government. **Student Resource 2-2: Responsibilities of Provincial Government (pp. 63-69)** provides an introductory questionnaire that asks students to consider how different levels of government affect their experiences.

As a class, use the list to brainstorm services and facilities that students think are provided by provincial government in Alberta. Post a list of these services and facilities in the classroom.

- Have students work with a small group to create a map of the electoral division in which they live.



### Weblink

Students can search for their electoral division on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca/streetkey/](http://www.elections.ab.ca/streetkey/).

Encourage groups to also use different sources of information, such as community brochures, neighbourhood or real estate maps and Internet sources. Consider using one of the following formats to create a simplified electoral division map. If the electoral division represents a large area, suggest that students add detail only to the area in which they live.

- ➔ **A bird's-eye view.** This type of map shows streets and areas and provides symbolic representations of buildings, facilities and residences.
- ➔ **A three-dimensional map.** This type of map shows streets and areas, but represents buildings, facilities and residences in three-dimensional formats.
- ➔ **A photo map.** This type of map shows streets and areas, but photographs or drawings of buildings, facilities and residences are added to the map in the appropriate places.

Have each group share their electoral division maps, noting similarities and differences in how they have represented them. Encourage students to consider why groups may have represented the same area in different ways and revisit the concept of perspectives.

- Use a cooperative learning jigsaw strategy to have each group research, in more depth, the responsibilities of the provincial level of government. This strategy involves the following steps:

1. Assign each group member responsibility for one or two of the departmental responsibilities of the current Alberta government (depending on group size) that are identified in the student resource. These responsibilities are represented by government ministries, which, in 2008, included:

- Aboriginal Relations
- Advanced Education and Technology
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Children and Youth Services
- Culture and Community Spirit
- Education
- Employment and Immigration
- Energy
- Environment
- Executive Council (Public Affairs)
- Finance and Enterprise
- Health and Wellness
- Housing and Urban Affairs
- International and Intergovernmental Relations
- Justice and Attorney General
- Municipal Affairs
- Seniors and Community Supports
- Service Alberta
- Solicitor General and Public Security
- Sustainable Resource Development
- Tourism, Parks and Recreation
- Transportation
- Treasury Board



## Assess & Reflect

Assess students' contributions to the electoral division maps by using a checklist such as the following:

Does this student demonstrate ability to...	Yes	Somewhat	Not Yet
Contribute to the placement of services and facilities relevant to provincial government on the group map?			
Compare different interpretations of information used to construct group maps?			



## Find Out More

The Alberta government website provides an up-to-date list of government ministries. These often change after an election and may change during a government's term of office. Check current government ministries at <http://alberta.ca/home/government.cfm>.



Information on the general responsibilities of each of these government ministries is provided in **Teacher Backgrounder 2** (pp. 110-121).

## Did You Know



The provinces' areas of responsibility as defined in the *Constitution Act 1867* (previously the *British North America Act 1867*) include health, child welfare, municipal government, transportation, labour, property and civil rights, and education.

An election year provides an excellent opportunity to look at how government ministries can change when elections result in changes in the political party in power or just with the ministers assigned to each ministry.

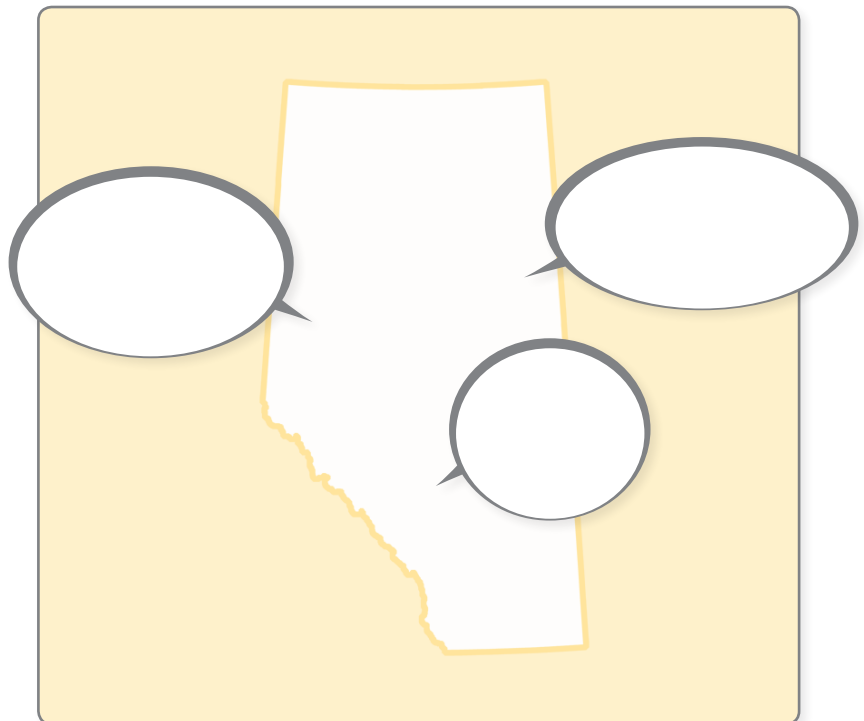
## Weblink



The *Constitution Act of 1867* can be accessed on the Department of Justice website at [http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/c1867\\_e.html](http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/c1867_e.html).

These government departments are those of the current government and may change if the government changes. Students should be made aware that these departments reflect the approach of a political party to government, but also do provide insight into what any provincial government in power has to take responsibility for. These ministries can be grouped into broader categories.

2. Regroup students into expert groups. The expert groups are comprised of one student from each map group. Students in expert groups are responsible for gathering and researching information on the departmental responsibilities of provincial government in Alberta. Students can use a graphic organizer, such as the **Triple T-Chart (p. 139)** to organize their research.
3. Each expert group should create a presentation of the information they collect so that they can teach students in their original groups about the area of government responsibility that they have researched. Encourage groups to develop a strategy for presenting their research to their electoral division mapping groups.
4. Have students return to their electoral division mapping groups and present their research to other group members. Have each group create “callouts” or “text bubbles” using construction or coloured paper to add labels to their electoral division maps, identifying how the provincial government is responsible for, or has an impact on, different aspects of life in communities.
5. The callouts or speech bubbles can also be created for the graffiti walls.





## Share

Ask students to work in small groups to develop questions to interview a Returning Officer. Interview questions can focus on meanings of representative and direct democracy, establishment of electoral divisions and how the electoral process is connected to the responsibilities of provincial government.

Interviews can be conducted in the following ways:

- Through Elections Alberta, invite a Returning Officer to the classroom to be interviewed.
- Compile interview questions and have a group of students represent the class in conducting a telephone interview.
- Send interview questions by email to the Returning Officer.

Have students compile and discuss answers. How are the Returning Officer's perspectives on democracy and government similar to or different from what the class has discovered and learned in their inquiry?

\*Be sensitive to the demands on a Returning Officer's time! Consider having one or a small group of students represent the class if conducting a telephone or email interview.



## Assess & Reflect

Ask students to reflect individually on what provincial government does for them personally.

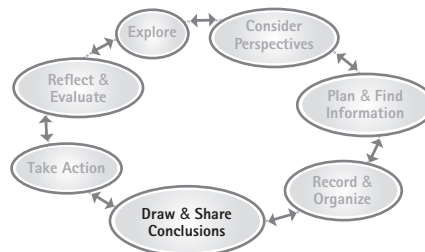
The research that students complete provides an opportunity for assessment of students' understandings of the responsibilities of provincial government. These understandings should be assessed through an individual demonstration of learning. Evaluation should be based on individual student performance and gathered from a variety of sources of evidence to make a judgement of student performance using the descriptors of the **rubric (p. 55)**:

- Use evidence from the T-Chart completed during expert group research to assess individual understandings of the responsibilities of provincial government.
- Use observation evidence collected throughout the activities of the learning sequence to consider performance of process skills and group participation.
- Ask students to submit the final page of Student Resource 2-2: Responsibilities of Provincial Government as evidence of their understanding of the concepts of responsibility and representation.



## Make It Matter - *Class Action Project*

- Encourage students to consider who is important to involve in their project planning and implementation by discussing and reflecting on questions such as the following:



- ➔ How are the goals of our class project related to the responsibilities of provincial government? Should our MLA be contacted? If so, how could he or she help support the project?
  - ➔ Who else is important to inform about the importance and goals of the project? Are there members of the school or community who can help support the project?
  - ➔ What strategies can best be used to obtain support for the project from different individuals and groups?
- Review the research for the class project. Use **Communicate and Implement (pp. 150-151)** to identify individuals and groups who can help support the project and ways to communicate the goals and importance of the project.







## 2 Why does provincial government matter?

### 2-1 Responsibilities? Me?

What do you think of when you hear the word responsibility? Chores? Schoolwork? Do you ever associate responsibility with what it means to be a citizen?

Over time, some of the responsibilities of citizens have changed. Although basic responsibilities are often linked to values that may have remained the same, the actions associated with those values have changed.

By the 1920s, more children were starting to attend school. By 1925, about 30% of girls and 25% of boys between the ages of 15 and 19 attended school. It was important to educate students about citizenship, although a citizenship that was based on British values and history.

How have children's responsibilities changed over time?



### Learning Log

What do you think your responsibilities as a citizen are?

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How would your life be different if you were born in the mid-1800s?

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### Did You Know

Over time, children in Canada have been expected to help out with family responsibilities. In the past, even very young children were given responsibility at an early age. Teenagers were expected to take on a wide range of responsibilities – including those such as finding a job to contribute to the family income, working on the farm, looking after the house and younger children, cooking, cleaning and sharing in all aspects of running a household.

Before the middle of the 1800s, there was really no such thing as childhood. It wasn't until the early 1900s that views started to change and people recognized that being a child was different from being an adult. Legislation, or laws, that regulated the minimum working age was passed to ensure that children went to school instead of to work.

What responsibilities of citizenship are expected of children? Today, many think that children should learn the basic responsibilities they will be expected to fulfill as adults. In the past, even though children were viewed as smaller versions of adults, they did not have the rights that children have today.



How do you think your responsibilities will change as you grow older? Use a graphic organizer such as the *Storyboard* to sketch some of the changing responsibilities you think that you will have to take on as you get older.




## 2 Why does provincial government matter?

### 2-2 Responsibilities of Provincial Government

Governments have responsibilities to the people who elect them. These responsibilities were set out in the *Constitution Act of 1867*. The *Constitution Act* says that provinces are responsible for:

- Health
- Child welfare
- Municipal government
- Transportation
- Labour
- Property and **civil rights** (these include rights that citizens are entitled to – for example, freedom of speech, religion, equality and security)
- Education.

Each provincial government decides how to carry out these responsibilities. This is often done by establishing **government ministries**, or departments, that look after each area of responsibility.

The provincial government also takes responsibility for its environment and resources. It has to look after its own **finances**, like taxes and budgets. The provincial government also provides many different services for the residents of the province, such as issuing birth certificates, making sure the public is safe and enforcing the laws.



#### Learning Log

What do you remember learning about the importance of the *Constitution Act of 1867*?

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How does government affect your daily life and experiences? Answer each of the questions in the questionnaire. Under each question, you will find some items. Beside each item, identify which level or levels of government you think influences it!

	Always	Occasionally	Never
1. Do you use an alarm clock to wake up? Radio programs _____ Power _____			
2. Do you eat cereal for breakfast? Bilingual food labels _____ Grain crops _____			
3. Do you take a bus or get a ride to school? Traffic signs, sidewalks and roads _____ Licenses on cars or buses _____			
4. Do you visit the doctor's office for a check-up? Health care _____			
5. Do you use a recreation centre in your community? Recreation programs _____			
6. Do you go camping in parks? Provincial park _____ National park _____			
7. Do you play on a sports team? Playing fields _____ Arena _____			
8. Have you ever had a part-time job? Workplace safety laws _____			
9. Do you visit with seniors or Elders? Seniors' Centre _____			
10. Have you ever seen an election held in your school or community league? Elections _____			



The webpage below shows a list of Alberta government ministries in 2008. What do you think each government ministry or department is responsible for? Write the government ministry or department beside its area of responsibility in the chart.

### ■ Alberta Provincial Ministries in 2008

Responsibility	Government Ministry or Department	Responsibility	Government Ministry or Department
Health		Property and Civil Rights	
Child Welfare		Education	
Municipal Government		Environment and Resources	
Transportation		Finances	
Labour		Services for Residents	

## Find Out More



Find out more about what two government ministries are responsible for. Record and organize your research using a graphic organizer such as a *Triple T-Chart* like the one below. Request this graphic organizer from your teacher.

Find out more about the responsibilities of the provincial government by exploring what each ministry does in Alberta.

Go to the Government of Alberta website and look for a list of the ministries. The weblink for the 2008 Alberta provincial government list of ministries is <http://alberta.ca/home/government.cfm>.

If you cannot use the Internet, look in the blue pages of the phone directory. There will be a list of provincial government ministries with general phone numbers. You can call the ministry that you are researching to ask for information about its responsibilities.

In the middle column of the chart, answer the following questions. Add some of your own questions.

1. What is the main purpose of this government ministry or department?
2. What are two to three of the most important responsibilities of this ministry or department?
3. What are examples of services, facilities or programs that this ministry provides to residents of Alberta?
4. What does this ministry or department have to do with your daily life?
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

Government Ministry	Purpose and Responsibilities Services, Facilities or Programs	Source of Information

## Responsibilities of a Representative

Being a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) is a full-time, important job. MLAs represent all of the people who live in the electoral division in which they were elected, whether those people are eligible to vote, voted for another candidate or did not vote at all. MLAs are responsible for helping their constituents with problems or concerns.

In the Legislative Assembly, MLAs share the views of their constituents by introducing bills and debating and discussing concerns with other MLAs. An MLA communicates with other elected members and various government ministries. MLAs perform most of their duties in their constituencies. Here they listen to the problems, questions, ideas and opinions of the people who live in the electoral division they represent.

MLAs also deal with **special-interest groups**, which are organizations and groups that promote specific views and actions. Do you know of any groups in your community that are concerned about the environment, child care, health, drunk driving, education or any other important issue? These groups can meet with an MLA, who may support their cause by proposing a new law or resolution in the Legislative Assembly or by writing a letter to a government ministry.

In addition to meeting with their constituents, MLAs spend time becoming informed about matters of public interest, preparing speeches and going to meetings to talk about policies and issues.

MLAs often have to take a stand on issues and decisions, and the perspective or view they support depends on the platforms of the political party to which they belong, their constituents' points of view and their own personal beliefs. Through public meetings, day-to-day contact and local media forums, MLAs gather information from as many constituents as possible. They then discuss the issue in private meetings, called **caucus meetings**, with other MLAs from the same party.



The caucus members decide as a group what their party's position will be. Voting in the Legislature tends to be along party lines, according to what the caucus decided beforehand. However, MLAs may vote as they see fit rather than according to their caucus's position. If some MLAs feel that the caucus's position does not reflect what their constituents want or that it would not be beneficial to the people who live and work in their electoral division, they can and sometimes do speak against the position of their caucus.

**Cabinet ministers** are MLAs who are in charge of specific government ministries and can influence ministry policies and programs. Ministers may remain as ministers but not MLAs when the Legislative Assembly has been dissolved for an election. As well as representing their constituents, ministers are ultimately responsible for the policies and actions of the ministry they lead.



## Did You Know

There are many different individuals and groups that a Minister has to deal with. For example, the Minister of Energy must be responsible to constituents as well as deal with all matters related to that ministry. Below is a partial list of people who the Minister of Energy might have to deal with:

- Technical staff in the Department of Energy and the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
- Natural gas, oil, electricity, mineral and petrochemical developers, producers and retailers
- Transporters of energy (e.g., pipelines, electrical transmission)
- Environmental and other nongovernment organizations
- Advocates of alternative energy sources
- Technical experts in industry and academia
- Committees and other groups formed to address energy matters
- MLAs from opposition parties, particularly the critics of the Energy department
- Energy and mining representatives from federal, provincial or territorial and municipal governments
- People in the energy field from other countries
- Representatives from the media
- Individual consumers and taxpayers from across the province.

**Private government members** are often called **backbenchers** because in the Legislative Assembly they sit in the back rows, behind the cabinet ministers. However, the correct term for any member who is not in cabinet is "private member." A private government member is an MLA who belongs to the governing party.

Private members sit on cabinet policy committees and can sponsor government **bills**, proposals for laws that will be discussed and debated before becoming law.

In addition, private government members, as well as opposition members, introduce their own bills. These are called **private bills**.

The role of an **opposition party** is to analyze and critique government activity, propose improvements and present itself to the public as an alternative to the party in power. Opposition parties often assign some of their MLAs to be critics of specific departments. Together, opposition critics are called a **shadow cabinet**. For example, an environment critic discusses issues with the Minister of Environment, suggests alternative policies and priorities and keeps these issues public. Opposition critics, like the ministers they shadow, hear concerns and ideas from various persons and interest groups from anywhere in the province.







## Learning Sequences

### LEARNING SEQUENCE 3

#### *If I could vote, would I?*

The electoral process represents one of the fundamental principles of democracy – that of citizen participation. The electoral process emphasizes the values of equity, fairness, accountability and openness. Learning Sequence 3 invites students to explore and experience the electoral process in Alberta. Students experience how to vote, the impact of a vote, how to convey messages and how to participate.



#### Prepare

##### Student Resources

- Student Resource 3-1: About Voting and Elections (pp. 81-83)
- Student Resource 3-2: To Vote or Not to Vote (pp. 84-90)
- Student Resource 3-3: An Election Experience (pp. 91-92)

##### Graphic Organizers

- Storyboard (p. 137)
- Triple T-Chart (p. 139)
- Mind Map (p. 140) or Flow Chart (p.141)

##### *Build the Vote! An Election Simulation*

- Election simulation resources, templates, forms and directions are provided in this resource.
- An **Election Simulation Toolkit** can be ordered from Elections Alberta at the contact information provided on page 4 of this resource.



#### 6 to 10 45-minute class periods



**Teacher Background** 3 (pp. 122-127) provides background information that you may find useful in supporting students' learning.

*An investigation of structures and functions within the electoral process*



#### Make It Matter

Students explore options for implementing their class action project and plan steps and activities.

- **Plan for Action (p. 152)**

Elections Alberta's **Election Simulation Toolkit** includes the following items:

- Electoral Division Map
- Provincial Electoral Division Map
- Voting Screen
- Pencils (3)
- Paper Ballot Box Seals (3)
- Election Officer Badges
- Scrutineer Badges
- "Vote Here" sign (with arrow tip)
- Registration Officer Sign
- Poll Book (modified to include 6 pages)
- Statement of Poll (photocopy)
- Voter Template for Visually Impaired
- Guide for Scrutineers
- Guide for Polling Place Officials
- Guide for Use of the Special Ballot Poll
- Guide for the Conduct of Mobile Polls
- Guide for Candidates on the *Election Act*
- Information for Students on Provincial Elections (brochure).

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 3

### *If I could vote, would I?*

#### Curriculum Connections

Inquiry Context	Learning Outcomes
<p><b>If I could vote, would I?</b></p> <p>An investigation of structures and functions within the electoral process</p>	<p><b>6.1.1</b> recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)</li><li>• (4) value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)</li></ul> <p><b>6.1.2</b> demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (3) What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a representative democracy? (C, PADM)</li></ul> <p><b>6.1.5</b> analyze the structure and functions of Alberta's provincial government by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (4) How are representatives chosen at the provincial level of government (i.e., electoral process)? (PADM)</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.1</b> develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) assess significant local and current affairs from a variety of sources, with a focus on examining bias and distinguishing fact from opinion</li><li>• (2) critically evaluate ideas, information and positions</li><li>• (4) generate original ideas and strategies in individual and group activities</li><li>➤ (5) seek responses to inquiries from various authorities through electronic media</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.4</b> demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) propose and apply new ideas, strategies and options, supported with facts and reasons, to contribute to decision making and problem solving</li><li>• (2) consider multiple perspectives when dealing with issues, decision making and problem solving</li><li>• (3) collaborate with others to devise strategies for dealing with problems and issues</li><li>➤ (7) use graphic organizers, such as mind mapping/webbing, flow charting and outlining, to present connections among ideas and information in a problem-solving environment</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.5</b> demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) demonstrate the skills of compromise to reach group consensus</li><li>• (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal</li><li>➤ (3) record group brainstorming, planning and sharing of ideas by using technology</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.7</b> apply the research process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) determine reliability of information filtering for point of view and bias</li><li>• (2) formulate questions to be answered through the research process</li><li>• (3) use graphs, tables, charts and Venn diagrams to interpret information</li><li>• (4) draw and support conclusions based on information gathered to answer a research question</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.8</b> demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) express opinions and present perspectives and information in a variety of forms such as oral or written presentations, speeches or debates</li><li>• (2) express reasons for their ideas and opinions, in oral or written form</li><li>• (5) listen to others to understand their perspectives</li></ul>

Inquiry Context	Learning Outcomes
	<p><b>6.S.9</b> develop skills of media literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ (3) analyze significant current affairs</li> <li>➤ (5) use selected presentation tools to demonstrate connections among various pieces of information</li> <li>➤ (6) recognize that information serves different purposes and that data from electronic sources may need to be verified to determine accuracy or relevance for the purpose used</li> </ul>

**C** Citizenship

**LPP** The Land: Places and People

**CC** Culture and Community

**I** Identity

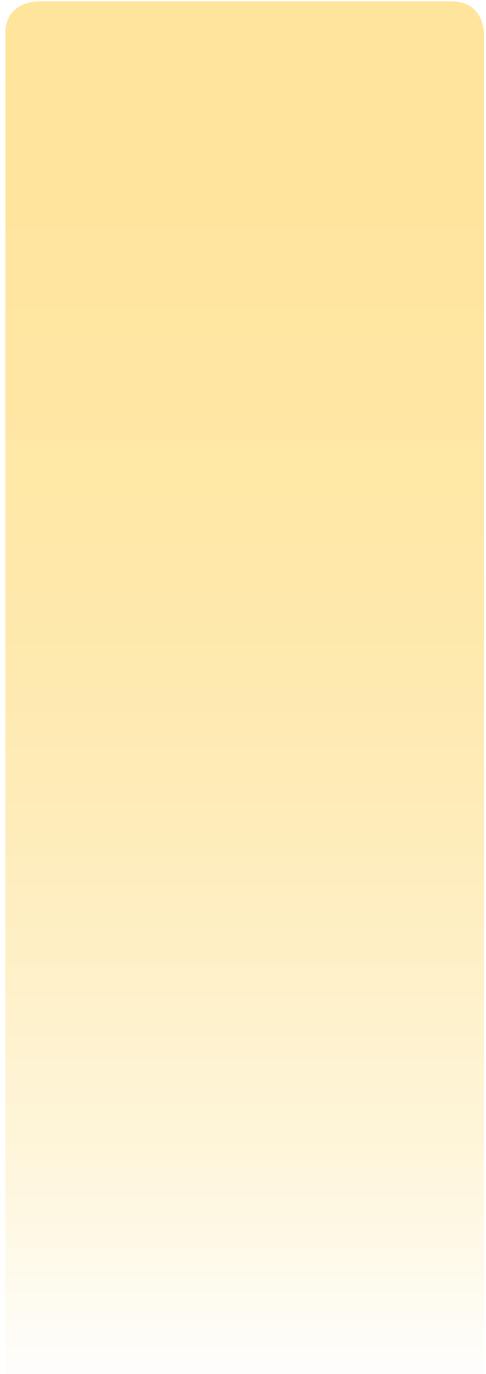
**GC** Global Connections

**PADM** Power, Authority and Decision Making

**ER** Economics and Resources

**TCC** Time, Continuity and Change

Selected curriculum outcomes from Alberta's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Program of Studies are infused throughout the Social Studies Program of Studies and are indicated by this symbol ➤.



## LEARNING SEQUENCE 3

*If I could vote, would I?*



### Checklist

Criteria	Yes	Somewhat	Not Yet
<b>Students provide evidence of their learning as they:</b>			
Listen and respond respectfully to understand democratic principles (6.1.1.1; 6.S.8.5)			
Describe the sequence and importance of the electoral process (6.1.5.4)			
Describe and assess ways to participate in democratic decision-making processes (6.1.1.4; 6.1.2.3; 6.S.4.1; 6.S.4.2)			
Examine, evaluate and assess sources of information (6.S.1.1; 6.S.1.2; 6.S.7.1; 6.S.7.3; 6.S.7.4; 6.S.9.5; 6.S.9.6)			
Access and organize information from different sources (6.S.1.5; 6.S.5.3)			
Contribute original ideas (6.S.1.4)			
Participate in problem solving and decision-making processes by offering ideas and providing examples and reasons (6.S.4.1; 6.S.4.2; 6.S.5.3; 6.S.8.2)			
Identify different points of view and perspectives (6.S.4.2)			
Analyze current affairs (6.S.9.3)			
Use graphic organizers to make connections between ideas (6.S.4.7, 6.S.7.3)			
Formulate and administer survey questions (6.S.7.2)			
Communicate information (6.S.8.1)			
Work collaboratively and cooperatively in a group setting (6.S.4.3; 6.S.5.1; 6.S.5.2; 6.S.8.5)			
Contribute to group processes (6.S.5.1, 6.S.5.2; 6.S.8.5)			

# LEARNING SEQUENCE 3

*If I could vote, would I?*



## Rubric

Level Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
<b>Describes the sequence and importance of the electoral process</b> (6.1.5.4)	Provides a <b>purposeful</b> description of the sequence and importance of the electoral process.	Provides a <b>relevant</b> description of the sequence and importance of the electoral process.	Provides a <b>basic</b> description of the sequence and importance of the electoral process.	Provides a <b>superficial</b> description of the sequence and importance of the electoral process.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
<b>Describes and assesses ways to participate in democratic decision-making processes</b> (6.1.1.4; 6.1.2.3; 6.S.4.1; 6.S.4.2)	Makes <b>insightful</b> comparisons of the effectiveness of multiple ways to participate in democratic processes.	Makes <b>functional</b> comparisons of the effectiveness of multiple ways to participate in democratic processes.	Makes <b>basic</b> comparisons of the effectiveness of multiple ways to participate in democratic processes.	Makes <b>inconsistent</b> comparisons of the effectiveness of multiple ways to participate in democratic processes.	
<b>Participates in problem solving and decision-making processes by offering ideas and providing examples and reasons</b> (6.S.4.1; 6.S.4.2; 6.S.5.3; 6.S.8.2)	Provides <b>insightful</b> ideas and <b>interrelated</b> examples and reasons to support solutions and proposals.	Provides <b>clear</b> ideas and <b>relevant</b> examples and reasons to support solutions and proposals.	Provides <b>adequate</b> ideas and <b>general</b> examples and reasons to support solutions and proposals.	Provides <b>unconnected</b> ideas and <b>overgeneralized</b> examples and reasons to support solutions and proposals.	
<b>Formulates and administers survey questions</b> (6.S.7.2)	Formulates <b>purposeful</b> questions (that would likely encourage a <b>meaningful</b> response).	Formulates <b>relevant</b> questions (that would likely encourage an <b>attentive</b> response).	Formulates <b>routine</b> questions (that would likely encourage a <b>general</b> response).	Formulates <b>superficial</b> questions (that could encourage a <b>trivial</b> response).	

\* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 3

*If I could vote, would I?*

### Teaching and Learning Activities

#### 1 About Voting and Elections

The provincial electoral process is an important aspect of the democratic process.

- Provide students with **Student Resource 3-1: About Voting and Elections (pp. 81-83)** and ask them to individually review the introduction and complete the Fast Quiz. Work with a partner to compare answers, providing reasons for choosing each response. Suggest that students use a process of consensus to agree on a response to each question.
- Discuss each question in the Fast Quiz as a class. Have pairs indicate, with a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down,” whether they think each statement is true or false. Discuss the process of consensus each pair used to agree on a paired response.

Answers to the Fast Quiz are provided in the student resource. This page may alternatively be made into an overhead transparency to be discussed with the class.



#### Assess & Reflect

Ask students to reflect on the processes used in consensus building:

- Two heads are better than one.
  - There can be different perspectives involved in looking at information.
  - Being an active listener is important.
  - Sometimes you can change your mind when you listen to reasons you didn't think of before.
- Revisit ideas from previous activities about the importance of participation in democratic processes. Provide students with **Student Resource 3-2: To Vote or Not to Vote (pp. 84-90)**. Refer them to the list of reasons for choosing to vote or not to vote.
- Have students work with their partner to rank the reasons in each column, with “1” being the most common reason provided for not voting and “6” or “9” being the least common reason. Discuss the rankings as a class and use the discussion to introduce the voter survey that students will conduct.

The survey provides a format in which students can explore information about the electoral and representative process, including:

- When and how elections are held
- Voter registration
- Electoral boundaries

### Integrate



#### Health and Life Skills

Discuss the process of consensus building and how it applies to many aspects of daily life. Skills related to consensus building are also developed in the Health and Life Skills Program of Studies.

### Find Out More



Elections Alberta completed a survey with the general public after the March 2008 Alberta provincial election. The results of this survey are provided in a research report entitled *Elections Alberta: Survey of Voters and Non-Voters* (July 17, 2008). This resource is available in PDF format on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca), as well as in the *Building Future Voters CD* mini-library. The survey provides information on the public's perception of voting, awareness of their rights and obligations, levels of voting participation and satisfaction with the voting process.

### Differentiate



View the three television advertisements and listen to the three radio advertisements that were produced by Elections Alberta for the 2008 provincial election. These advertisements can be found on the *Building Future Voters CD*.

Have students develop their own 30-second advertisements, either for television or radio, to encourage people to vote. Provide students with a graphic organizer such as the **Storyboard (p. 137)** to plan their advertisements.



- Representation: MLAs
- Political parties
- Participating in elections, including campaigning, election platforms and media.

- Assign students the task of conducting a survey with one or two adults who are of voting age (18 years of age or older). The survey provided in the student resource asks questions about experience with elections and knowledge-based questions about the electoral process and the current provincial government in power.
- Have students work in small groups to compare the results of their surveys. Ask each student to use a graphic organizer such as a **Triple T-Chart (p. 139)** to organize their results. The student resource provides background information for students, corresponding to each survey question, in the section “Exploring Results.”

Invite each group to share insights from the survey with the rest of the class. What have they learned about the electoral process from conducting the survey?

Question	Interview 1	Interview 2
Do you discuss politics and government with your family?	Often discusses politics at dinner time	Not often

## 2 An Election Experience

Experiencing the electoral process provides insight into how elections work and why they are structured and legislated the way they are. The electoral process emphasizes the importance of open, fair and impartial elections.

- Explain to students that they will be participating in an election simulation, taking on the roles of voters as well as people involved in administering the election process. This process will encourage students to explore concepts related to the electoral process in the context of a classroom, multiple classrooms or a school-wide election. Start by introducing aspects of the electoral process and discussing questions such as the following as a class:
  - Voter registration: Why should all voters register? (*Encourage students to consider ideas such as ensuring one vote per person, fairness, making sure that only people really living in the area actually vote, etc.*)
  - Voter eligibility: Why do we establish eligibility criteria for voters? (*Students may discuss ideas that include the importance of eligibility criteria to make sure that voters are old enough to make a good decision; to protect citizen’s right to vote; to ensure that voters actually live in the electoral division, etc.*)
  - The election process: Why is it important to follow the same process for each election?



## Did You Know

Many 18-year-old men bravely entered into combat for Canada in World War II. It was after this period in history that there was a movement to drop the voting age from 21 to 18.

In the 2004 federal general election, 37% of electors aged 18–24 voted. In the 2006 general election, approximately 44% of electors in the 18–24 age group voted.

Elections Canada. *Election basics: Frequently asked questions.* Young Voters Site [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).



## Integrate

### Mathematics Information and Communication Technologies

Have students graph voter participation in Alberta. Statistics relating to voting rates can be accessed on the Alberta Online Encyclopedia website at [www.abheritage.ca/abpolitics/process/election\\_results.html](http://www.abheritage.ca/abpolitics/process/election_results.html).

Have students focus on one electoral division and research, chart and graph voter participation percentages.

Graphs can also be created using a spreadsheet program such as Excel. Have students analyze and compare their results.



Through Elections Alberta, invite a Returning Officer to participate with students in planning and holding the student election. Returning Officers can be invited to participate in a number of ways:

- Ask the Returning Officer to email or fax a Writ of Election on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer to establish the beginning of the simulation. Discuss dates and timelines for the election simulation with the Returning Officer when you are in contact with him or her.
  - Invite the Returning Officer to the classroom to provide an information session on electoral processes for the class or for students who are acting as Deputy Returning Officers and Poll Clerks.
  - Invite the Returning Officer to participate with students on Polling Day. The Returning Officer can be asked to act as an observer. Discuss with students how established democracies, including Canada, often send observers to developing democracies.

- Introduce the election simulation by providing students with **Student Resource 3-3: An Election Experience (pp. 91-92)**, which guides students through questions that they will consider in planning and holding a student election. Students are encouraged to identify issues that will become a focus for the student election.

The election simulation is provided in *Build the Vote! An Election Simulation*. This resource booklet provides templates, forms and directions for implementing an election in the classroom. An Election Simulation Toolkit can also be ordered from Elections Alberta at the contact information provided on page 4 of this resource. A PDF version of the election simulation resource is also provided on the ***Building Future Voters CD***.

- Encourage students to add insights about the electoral process to their graffiti walls.
- The information, forms and templates in the election simulation are designed to actively engage students, give them opportunities to stand as candidates, explore political party affiliations, run campaigns and vote.
  - ➔ Information is presented in source card formats, designed to be photocopied and cut into two to four cards per page.
  - ➔ Source cards represent roles involved in the electoral process, including election officers, candidates, candidates' official agents, scrutineers, lobby groups and media.
  - ➔ Templates guide students through steps in the process that are modeled on Alberta election processes.

The activities, templates and source cards can be applied in different contexts:

- ➔ To conduct an election simulation in the classroom
- ➔ To conduct an election simulation for combined classrooms at the same grade level
- ➔ To organize and conduct an election simulation or student council election for your school.

## IF THIS IS AN ELECTION YEAR

Post a large sheet of poster paper horizontally. Divide it into three columns, labelled “Fact,” “Opinion” and “Not Sure.” Introduce the chart to the students. Ask them to define and clarify the difference between facts and opinions.

Make sure students understand that facts are verifiable, while opinions are not. Ask students the following questions, allowing for as many responses as there is time:

- ➔ What do you know about this election?
- ➔ How do you know?
- ➔ What do you know about the candidates?
- ➔ How do you know?

As each response is given, ask the group to evaluate whether the statement is a fact (provable) or an opinion. Write the statement in the corresponding column. If consensus is not reached for any statement, write it in the “Not Sure” column. When all responses are given and posted, review the items in each column. Discuss whether any of the items in the “Not Sure” column are verifiable as fact.

When reviewing the “Opinion” column, be sure to address the idea that opinions are not invalid, and talk about what makes them valid (different ideas, goals, perspectives and understandings). You can also examine the newspaper or magazine articles and campaign flyers or posters that the students bring in. Some might bring in editorials, political cartoons, or news articles.

Activity adapted from *Voting: What's it all about?* Read-Write-Think. NCTE International Reading Association website. [www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=396](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=396).



## Assess & Reflect

Use a checklist to assess students’ demonstrations of their understanding of the electoral process.

Use criteria such as the following to assess understanding:

- Analyzes the structure and function of the electoral process.

Does this student demonstrate ability to...	Yes	Somewhat	Not Yet
Identify the characteristics of the electoral process in sequence?			
Provide reasons for each characteristic within the electoral process?			
Compare roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups involved in the electoral process?			



## Assess & Reflect

Ask students to reflect individually on how the electoral process affects them personally.

The research that students complete provides an opportunity for assessment of students' understandings of the electoral process. These understandings should be assessed through an individual demonstration of learning.

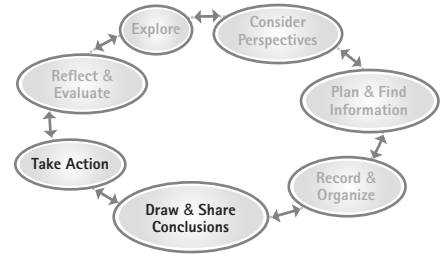
Evaluation should be based on individual student performance and gathered from a variety of sources of evidence to make a judgement of student performance using the descriptors of the **rubric** (p. 75):

- Use evidence from the work that individual students complete during the student election to assess individual understand of the electoral process
- Use observation evidence collected throughout the activities of the learning sequence to consider performance of process skills and group participation.



## Make It Matter - *Class Action Project*

- Encourage students to draw conclusions from the research they completed to support their project. Use a graphic organizer such as a **Mind Map** (p. 140) or **Flow Chart** (p. 141) and **Plan for Action** (p. 152) they can take to develop paths for action they can take. Provide students with time to start to implement actions related to the project.



- Discuss how elected representatives identify things that need to be improved or changed and develop a plan to try to implement change or take action.
- Work with students to establish a context for the election that is connected to the class project. This context can involve possible actions that each group will present as part of their election campaigns, depending on the type of project your class is implementing:
  - ➔ Strategies for communicating and lobbying for a need for change with their MLA or the government, such as making a presentation, sending a letter, sharing research and findings, sending an invitation to meet with the class, etc.
  - ➔ Strategies for implementing the project in the classroom or school, such as holding a school awareness campaign, organizing student meetings or working groups, holding lunch hour take action meetings, etc.
  - ➔ Strategies for implementing the project in the community, such as preparing a community information night, holding a press conference, organizing a public service announcement or campaign, organizing a mini-conference, etc.
- Candidates can campaign on the basis of how they will take leadership in developing, furthering and implementing the goals of the project.



**3** If I could vote, would I?

### 3-1 About Voting and Elections

Voting is sometimes described as the most important action that a citizen can take to be politically involved. Every eligible voter has the right to vote in a democracy, although some choose not to vote.

A democracy cannot exist without free and fair elections. A free and fairly run election makes everyone equal because each citizen has one vote. Therefore, voting gives every individual an equal say. **Collectively**, or taken all together, election results can send a message to politicians, political parties and the public, letting them know what positions and points of view are supported by the majority.

All levels of government make important decisions that affect almost every aspect of your life. Some of these decisions affect things like:

- Your school, including how much time you spend in school
- The environment, including how clean the air and water is or how global warming problems are dealt with
- Your health, including the availability of health insurance or how much it costs to go to the doctor or buy prescription drugs
- Who gets to visit, work and live in the country
- Your safety, including the size of police and fire departments
- How much money the government will spend on the military or on peace-keeping missions.

In Alberta, the **electoral process**, or the steps and actions involved in an election, is run by an organization called Elections Alberta. This organization is independent from the government. Elections Alberta makes sure that when an election happens, the following conditions are met:

- The election is open, fair and impartial.
- Voters have the necessary information to participate in the election.
- Political participants have the information and assistance to make sure they are following election rules.



#### Learning Log

What do you know about elections? Why do you think they are so important in a democracy?

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#### Learning Log

Why do you think Elections Alberta is independent from the government?

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- Election officers are trained to make sure elections are run properly and results are made available to people.
- Elections are evaluated to recommend any changes that could be made to improve the electoral process.



Take this Fast Quiz on your own. What do you think – True or False? Discuss your responses with a partner. Use a process of consensus to agree on a response for each question.

- \_\_\_ 1. In some countries, the voting age is less than 18.
- \_\_\_ 2. The United States is the world's most populated democracy.
- \_\_\_ 3. It is illegal to eat your ballot in a Canadian federal election.
- \_\_\_ 4. The secret ballot originated in Australia in the 1850s and is sometimes called the Australian ballot.
- \_\_\_ 5. The word "democracy" originated in ancient Rome.
- \_\_\_ 6. Quebec was the first Canadian province to allow women to vote.
- \_\_\_ 7. In some countries, voting is compulsory. If a person chooses not to vote, he or she can be fined, made to do community service or given a prison sentence.
- \_\_\_ 8. Alberta was the first province to hold an election for an Alberta representative to the Senate of Canada.



## Fast Quiz Check

<p>1. In some countries, the voting age is less than 18.</p>	<p><b>True</b></p> <p>There are a number of countries around the world where the voting age is less than 18.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Brazil, the minimum voting age is 16. Voting is voluntary until you turn 18, and then it is compulsory.</li> <li>- In Croatia, everyone gets to vote at 18, but if you are 16 and employed full-time, then you also have the right to vote.</li> <li>- Iran has the lowest voting age at 15.</li> </ul>
<p>2. The United States is the world's most populated democracy.</p>	<p><b>False</b></p> <p>India is the most populated democracy. Over 600 million people were eligible to vote in India's 2004 national election.</p>
<p>3. It is illegal to eat your ballot in a Canadian federal election.</p>	<p><b>True</b></p> <p>Six members of the Edible Ballot Society, a protest group, were charged after the 2000 Canadian federal election for wilfully destroying a ballot.</p>
<p>4. The secret ballot originated in Australia in the 1850s and is sometimes called the Australian ballot.</p>	<p><b>True</b></p> <p>New Brunswick was the first colony in British North America to use the secret ballot, in 1855.</p>
<p>5. The word "democracy" originated in ancient Rome.</p>	<p><b>False</b></p> <p>The Greeks coined the term for democracy. Demos means "the people" and kratos means "to rule." Together these terms create a definition for democracy – "ruled by the people."</p>
<p>6. Quebec was the first Canadian province to allow women to vote.</p>	<p><b>False</b></p> <p>In 1916, Manitoba became the first province to grant full voting privileges to women.</p>
<p>7. In some countries, voting is compulsory. If one chooses not to vote, they can be charged with a small fine, community service or a prison sentence.</p>	<p><b>True</b></p> <p>For example, voting is compulsory in Australia. Voter turnout in Australia has not dropped below 94% since the general election in 1955 (when it was approximately 88%).</p>
<p>8. Alberta was the first province to hold an election for an Alberta representative to the Senate of Canada.</p>	<p><b>True</b></p> <p>Members of the Senate are appointed, not elected. However, in Alberta, three senate nominee elections have been held since 1989. In 1990, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed Stan Waters as the first elected Senator. In 2007, Bert Brown was appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.</p>

### 3 If I could vote, would I?



#### 3-2 To Vote or Not to Vote



Why do you think some people choose to vote and others do not? Explore the following list of reasons. Rank each list in the order that you think is most common.

Rank	Common Reasons for Voting	Rank	Common Reasons for Not Voting
	To exercise the right – we live in a democracy and we have the right to vote – why not use it		Do not have time
	Out of duty – many people feel that it is their job as citizens to participate in elections		Forget
	To support a particular candidate or their political party		Have to work
	To have a voice – to have a say in how things are done		Do not like any of the choices
	To change things, to make a difference		Do not know who to vote for
	The system does not work if people do not vote		Out of town
			Not interested
			Do not think it matters
			Do not know when or where to vote



#### Survey

Use the questions on the Survey form to interview one or two individuals who are of voting age (18 and older). Add your own questions to the interview.





## Survey

(Circle one that applies)

Gender: Male Female

Age: 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 >55

### Part I: Participation

Do you discuss politics and government with your family?

Do you believe that it is important to vote? Why or why not?

Have you ever voted in an election (federal, provincial or municipal)?

Was there ever a time that you did not vote? Could you explain why?

At what age did you first vote?

When you vote, what is the number one thing that you consider when making your decision?

*(Continued on next page)*

## **Part II: Knowledge**

How often are provincial elections held?

What is an electoral division? In what electoral division do you live?

What is voter registration? How is it conducted?

Why are voters registered?

What does MLA stand for?

Who is your current MLA?

What is a political party?

What political party does your MLA belong to?

How many political parties do we currently have in Alberta? How many are represented in the Legislature?

What advice would you give future voters about participating during an election?

## ■ Exploring Survey Information

### When you vote, what is the number one thing that you consider when making your decision?

People can provide different reasons to explain why they vote the way they do. Some vote for a candidate based strictly on individual qualifications. Others look at their vote as a vote for both their candidate and for the political party that candidate represents, unless the candidate is running as an independent rather than as a member of a specific political party. Some may explain that they listen not only to the candidate but also to the party leader. Party leaders will campaign on what their party intends to do if they form a government, while individual candidates may also focus on what they want for the electoral division they will represent.

### How often are provincial elections held?

The *Constitution Act* requires that provincial elections be held at least once every five years. Usually, they are held approximately every four years. In Alberta, the government in power can decide when to call an election. Sometimes it waits until it must call the election. Other times the government will call an election early.

Once an election is called, each electoral division goes through the election process. Qualified people can become official candidates and run in the election, and most represent political parties. Candidates and parties campaign to get support from voters. Through three days of advance polling and on Polling Day, the polls are open from 9 a.m.–8 p.m. for eligible voters to cast their ballots.

### What is an electoral division? In what electoral division do you live?

The decisions that are made about elections are not all made by voters. One decision that must be made is how to divide the province into electoral divisions. Each electoral division has one MLA. In 2008, there were 83 constituencies for over 3 million Albertans.

Electoral divisions are determined by a special organization called the Electoral Boundaries Commission. They can also be changed. The Electoral Boundaries Commission is made up of a chairperson appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and four members, who are called commissioners. The commissioners are also appointed. Two are recommended by the Premier and two are recommended by the Leader of the Official Opposition. The boundaries are established mainly on the basis of population. However, they also consider common community interests, the geographical area, natural boundaries such as rivers, political boundaries such as municipalities and other factors. The Electoral Boundaries Commission's decisions are guided by a law called the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*. When the Commission changes boundaries, the changes must become law before they can take effect.



### Learning Log

Why do you think governments must call an election every five years? Why do you think the times between elections can vary?

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### Weblink

Electoral division maps are available from Elections Alberta. You can find out what electoral division you live in at the weblink [www.elections.ab.ca/streetkey/](http://www.elections.ab.ca/streetkey/).

## Learning Log



Why do you think it is important to keep track of who has voted on Polling Day?

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### What is voter registration? How is it conducted?

Elections Alberta records the names of eligible voters on a permanent Register of Electors. A List of Electors is provided for each electoral division during an election. Elections Alberta also provides an online voter registration service. Eligible voters can add their names to the List of Electors on voting day as well by providing identification to prove who they are, and registering at the **Polling Station**, the place where they will vote, by completing an oath. In some areas, Elections Alberta will conduct an **enumeration**, or a door-to-door canvass to register eligible voters.

## Weblink



Elections Alberta uses an online voter registration system called Voterlink. Eligible voters can register to vote using the Internet at [www.voterlink.ab.ca](http://www.voterlink.ab.ca).

### Why are voters registered?

The **Register of Electors** is used to maintain an accurate and up-to-date list of eligible voters. The **List of Electors** is used to keep track of who has voted on Polling Day and ensure that people vote only once.

## Find Out More



Young adults can get involved by joining a party's youth association. Information on party youth associations or provincial political parties in general is available from individual party headquarters.

These are listed in the white pages of your telephone directory under the party's name.

You can also find this information on the Elections Alberta Website at [www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/603.htm](http://www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/603.htm).

### What does MLA stand for?

MLA stands for Member of the Legislative Assembly. When a candidate gets elected, he or she becomes an MLA. An MLA represents everyone within an electoral division's boundaries, regardless of how they voted in the last election or whether they voted at all.

### Who is your current MLA?

A list of current MLAs can be found on the Legislative Assembly of Alberta's website at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca).

### What is a political party?

When a group of people have similar ideas about the major issues affecting people in a democratic society, they may form a political party. A **political party** is formed to present candidates who will run in an election. If the candidate is elected to office, he or she will have a chance to put their party's ideas into practice.

In an election campaign, candidates concentrate on promoting policies that they believe will represent the best interests of the people in their electoral division. Political parties begin the work of choosing candidates long before an election. Each party **nominates**, or selects, one candidate to run in each electoral division. Candidates who don't belong to a political party are called independents.

### What political party does your MLA belong to?

Alberta's major political parties are the Progressive Conservatives, the Liberals, and the New Democrats, although there are other large parties. These parties are also prominent in federal politics and in the politics of other provinces. They have both federal and provincial divisions, and each division has its own members and selects its own candidates.

### How many political parties do we currently have in Alberta? How many are represented in the Legislature?

As of 2008, there were nine registered political parties in Alberta:

- Alberta Greens
- Alberta Liberal Party
- Alberta New Democratic Party
- Alberta Party
- Alberta Social Credit Party
- Communist Party of Alberta
- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta
- Separation Party of Alberta
- Wildrose Alliance Party.

After the 2008 provincial election, there were three political parties represented in the Alberta Legislature – the Progressive Conservative Party with 72 seats, the Liberal Party with 9 seats and the New Democratic Party with 2.



### Did You Know

In Canadian elections, winners are chosen through the **single-member plurality** system, or “first-past-the-post.” In other words, the candidate winning the most votes in an electoral division is the winner, even if he or she received less than 50% of the “popular vote,” which is the total number of votes cast.

Another voting system used by some democracies is **proportional representation**, in which parties win seats according to the percentage of the total votes cast in their favour. There are many countries using this system, including Germany, Switzerland and Ireland.



### Find Out More

One of the responsibilities of the Chief Electoral Officer involves preparing a report, with the official results of the election and statistics on voter turnout. You can find these reports on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca). Immediately after an election, Elections Alberta also provides unofficial results.

## What advice would you give future voters about participating during an election?

Political parties and candidates use many strategies to campaign, or promote their views and ability to represent the people who live and work in their electoral division. All people can actively participate in election campaigns by using strategies like the ones that follow:

- Candidates often go door to door during their campaigns. If they come to your door, don't be afraid to ask questions. In fact, people seeking public office will want you to ask questions. Remember that they are competing for your vote, and a chance to explain the wisdom of their party's policies is a chance to convince you to vote for them.
- Pick the issues that most concern you, and find out what your candidates and their parties plan to do about them.
- If you don't get a chance to talk to candidates face to face, call their campaign headquarters.
- When candidates or parties have previously held seats in the Legislative Assembly, you can find out how they handled issues in the past by reading copies of *Hansard*, which can be found on the Assembly's website, [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca), and is searchable by keyword. If you know the important details about an issue, your questions will be more to the point, and you will be better able to judge how much the candidates know about that particular issue and whether their views reflect yours.
- One of the best ways to find out about a party's election **platform**, or their views, principles and policies, is when candidates of one electoral division get together to talk about issues and answer voters' questions. You might have a chance to hear how candidates would deal with your concerns and those of other people in community meetings or open houses.
- If you miss a community meeting, you may be able to take part in a phone-in program, watch candidates' panel discussions or the party leaders' debate or read their statements on important issues in the newspaper.
- The media are helpful sources of information about candidates and issues. Television, radio and newspapers all provide information and articles on election issues, the best of which involve the candidates themselves speaking on various matters.
- Political parties and candidates also use different forms of advertising – television and radio commercials, newspaper advertisements, lawn signs and posters. Check out the messages that these different forms of advertising provide.



Design a *Poster* or *Storyboard* for a television advertisement to encourage community members to register to vote for the next election. Request the storyboard graphic organizer from your teacher.



### 3-3 An Election Experience

Can you think of times when someone has represented you? Or you have represented others? When you are a group leader or spokesperson, you represent the members of your group. When a family member attends a community meeting, he or she may be representing you and your interests. When a classmate attends a school meeting, he or she may represent your class. Representation in government works much the same way, even if it is a student government.

A student government can represent the interests and voices of students when making decisions that may affect everyone. A student government can also take responsibility for leadership tasks related to a school or classroom project or action plan.

This election experience is based on processes in the *Election Act*, which is the legislation governing electoral procedure in Alberta.



Does your school already have a student government? How are you represented? What opportunities are there for students to show leadership?

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As a class, decide what type of student election you will hold. Identify whether your election will be held in your school, with other classrooms or in your classroom only.

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If you had a student government, what would its responsibilities be? Think about this question as you prepare to hold a student election. Make a list and check it with other classmates.

### 3 If I could vote, would I?



## Make It Matter



Make your student election matter to your class action project.

What actions or policies will be important to the candidates' election campaigns? Consider strategies like the following, depending on the type of project you are working on.

- **Strategies for communicating and lobbying for a need for change** with your MLA or the government, such as making a presentation, sending a letter, sharing research and findings or sending an invitation to meet with the class.

- **Strategies for implementing the project in the classroom or school**, such as holding a school awareness campaign, organizing student meetings or working groups or holding lunch hour take action meetings.

- **Strategies for implementing the project in the community**, such as preparing a community information night, holding a press conference, organizing a public service announcement or campaign or organizing a mini-conference.

Encourage your candidates to campaign on the basis of how they promote your class action project.

## Did You Know



The *Election Act* is the main legislation that guides the conduct of elections in Alberta.

It sets out all the rules and procedures that must be followed to ensure that elections are fair and impartial. Elections Alberta is responsible for making sure the *Election Act* is followed. They must remain independent from any political party or government in power.

In Alberta, there are criteria that must be met for voting eligibility. To be eligible to vote in a provincial election in Alberta, a person must:

1. Be a Canadian citizen
2. Be 18 years old or older
3. Be ordinarily resident in Alberta for at least six months prior to Polling Day.

The following persons are not eligible to vote:

- Returning Officers (except to break a tie)
- Persons who, on Polling Day, are inmates of correctional institutions, excluding persons sentenced to terms of imprisonment of 10 days or less or for the non-payment of fines.



What criteria will establish voter eligibility in your election?

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In some ways, your school is like an **electoral division**. Your classroom is like a **polling subdivision**. In a provincial election, each electoral division must elect a representative. In order to vote, each eligible voter must **register**, or identify themselves by adding their name to the List of Electors. Voting takes place in **polling places** within each polling subdivision.



Why do you think it is important that all voters register?

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In most provincial elections, there are issues that people are concerned about. Your student election will be focused on issues that are important to your class. The issues may relate directly to your classroom or school. They may also be issues related to a project that your class or school is working on.



What issues do you think will be important in your election?

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## Learning Sequences

### LEARNING SEQUENCE 4

#### *What matters after an election?*

The processes of democracy do not end with an election. In Learning Sequence 4, students explore ways that they can build strategies for participation and involvement in the electoral process.



#### Prepare

##### Student Resources

- Student Resource 4-1: What Matters (pp. 103-105)

##### Graphic Organizers

- T-Chart (p. 134)
- Persuasion Map (p. 142)
- Bookmark Template (p. 143) or Trading Card Template (p. 144)



#### 4 to 6 45-minute class periods



**Teacher Backgrounder 4** (pp. 128-131) provides background information that you may find useful in supporting students' learning.

*A focus on ways to stay involved in the political process after an election*



#### Make It Matter

Students assess the impact and results of their activities and consider how effective their class action project has been.

- **Assess the Impact (p. 153)**

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 4

### *What matters after an election?*

#### Curriculum Connections

Inquiry Context	Learning Outcomes
<p><b>What matters after an election?</b></p> <p>A focus on ways to stay involved in the political process after an election</p>	<p><b>6.1.1</b> recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada (C, I)</li><li>• (4) value citizens' participation in a democratic society (C)</li></ul> <p><b>6.1.2</b> demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (3) What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a representative democracy? (C, PADM)</li></ul> <p><b>6.1.6</b> analyze how individuals, groups and associations within a community impact decision making of local and provincial governments by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) How can individuals, groups and associations within a community participate in the decision-making process regarding current events or issues (i.e., lobbying, petitioning, organizing and attending local meetings and rallies, contacting elected representatives)? (C, PADM)</li><li>• (3) In what ways do elected officials demonstrate their accountability to the electorate (e.g., respond to constituents, participate in local events, represent and express in government meetings the concerns of constituents)? (C, PADM)</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.1</b> develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) assess significant local and current affairs from a variety of sources, with a focus on examining bias and distinguishing fact from opinion</li><li>• (3) re-evaluate personal opinions to broaden understanding of a topic or an issue</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.4</b> demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (2) collaborate with others to devise strategies for dealing with problems and issues</li><li>➤ (3) select and use technology to assist in problem solving</li><li>➤ (4) solve issue-related problems, using such communication tools as a word processor or e-mail to involve others in the process</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.5</b> demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (2) work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal</li><li>➤ (3) record group brainstorming, planning and sharing of ideas by using technology</li><li>➤ (4) extend the scope of a project beyond classroom collaboration by using communication technologies, such as the telephone and e-mail</li></ul> <p><b>6.S.6</b> develop age-appropriate behaviour for social involvement as responsible citizens contributing to their community, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (1) demonstrate commitment to the well-being of their community by drawing attention to situations of injustice where action is needed</li></ul>

Inquiry Context	Learning Outcomes
	<p><b>6.S.7</b> apply the research process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (4) draw and support conclusions based on information gathered to answer a research question</li> <li>➤ (11) reflect on and describe the processes involved in completing a project</li> </ul> <p><b>6.S.8</b> demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (2) express reasons for their ideas and opinions, in oral or written form</li> <li>➤ (7) communicate effectively through appropriate forms, such as speeches, reports and multimedia presentations, applying information technologies that serve particular audiences and purposes</li> </ul>

**C** Citizenship

**LPP** The Land: Places and People

**CC** Culture and Community

**I** Identity

**GC** Global Connections

**PADM** Power, Authority and Decision Making

**ER** Economics and Resources

**TCC** Time, Continuity and Change

Selected curriculum outcomes from Alberta's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Program of Studies are infused throughout the Social Studies Program of Studies and are indicated by this symbol ➤.



## LEARNING SEQUENCE 4

*What matters after an election?*



### Checklist

Criteria	Yes	Somewhat	Not Yet
<b>Students provide evidence of their learning as they:</b>			
Listen and respond respectfully to understand democratic principles (6.1.1.1)			
Value citizen participation (6.1.1.1; 6.1.1.4)			
Identify roles and responsibilities of citizens (6.1.1.1; 6.1.6.1; 6.1.2.3)			
Apply understandings of the electoral process (6.1.1.4; 6.1.6.3)			
Express and support opinion (6.S.1.3, 6.S.8.2)			
Combine and compare information to develop conclusions and propose solutions (6.S.4.3; 6.S.4.4; 6.S.7.4)			
Identify different points of view and perspectives (6.S.1.1; 6.S.5.3)			
Communicate with others to discuss and solve issue-related problems (6.S.4.2; 6.S.5.2; 6.S.5.4, 6.S.8.7)			
Communicate information (6.S.5.4; 6.S.8.7)			
Collaborate with others (6.S.5.2; 6.S.4.3)			
Demonstrate commitment to participate with community issues (6.S.6.1)			
Reflect on processes used (6.S.7.11)			

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 4

*What matters after an election?*

How am I doing?



How well did I:	Great job	Good start	Not there yet	I know this because:
Contribute to the group?				
Provide information and ideas?				
Listen to the ideas of others?				

How consistently did I:	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not very often	I know this because:
Communicate ideas and opinions with others?				
Apply my understandings to my work?				
Reflect on what I was learning?				

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 4

*What matters after an election?*



### Rubric

Level Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Limited *	Insufficient / Blank *
<b>Values citizen participation</b> (6.1.1.1, 6.1.1.4)	Provides <b>meaningful</b> description of ways that citizens can contribute to improve quality of life.	Provides <b>purposeful</b> description of ways that citizens can contribute to improve quality of life.	Provides <b>appropriate</b> description of ways that citizens can contribute to improve quality of life.	Provides <b>minimal</b> description of ways that citizens can contribute to improve quality of life.	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.
<b>Applies understandings of the electoral process</b> (6.1.1.4; 6.1.6.3)	Applies <b>comprehensive</b> examples of roles and responsibilities in the electoral process to justify importance of participation.	Applies <b>thorough</b> examples of roles and responsibilities in the electoral process to justify importance of participation.	Applies <b>generalized</b> examples of roles and responsibilities in the electoral process to justify importance of participation.	Applies <b>superficial</b> examples of roles and responsibilities in the electoral process to justify importance of participation.	
<b>Collaborates with others</b> (6.S.5.2; 6.S.4.2)	Contributes <b>skillfully</b> to final product and <b>consistently</b> engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Contributes <b>effectively</b> to final product and <b>frequently</b> engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Contributes <b>reasonably</b> to final product and <b>usually</b> engages in appropriate group behaviours.	Contributes <b>minimally</b> to final product and <b>seldom</b> engages in appropriate group behaviours.	
<b>Reflects on project</b> (6.S.7.11)	Provides a <b>perceptive</b> reflection on the project.	Provides a <b>thoughtful</b> reflection on the project.	Provides a <b>basic</b> reflection on the project.	Provides an <b>unclear</b> reflection on the project.	

\* When work is judged to be limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

## LEARNING SEQUENCE 4

### What matters after an election?

#### Teaching and Learning Activities

##### 1 Voting: A Mandatory or Optional Right?

The issue of participation in the electoral process is one that continues to be discussed, whether in an election year or not. Considering whether voting should be mandatory or a choice encourages students to critically analyze the importance of the electoral process in a democracy.

- Ask students to review what they have learned about the place of the electoral process in a democracy. Is voting a right or a privilege? Explore meanings of these concepts with students. (*Encourage students to revisit what they know about rights that are guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including political rights. Discuss privilege as a benefit or a right that is not necessarily extended to everyone.*)
- Work as a class to create a comparison chart, using a graphic organizer such as a **T-Chart (p. 134)** or poster paper. Brainstorm examples and non-examples of the effects of mandatory or optional voting.
- Have students create a graphic organizer such as a **Persuasion Map (p. 142)**, using facts and examples to support a position on an issue associated with voting.  
Encourage students to focus on a specific question in creating their persuasion maps, such as “Should voting be mandatory for all citizens?” Ask students to share their persuasion maps with other students in the class.
- Students may also be encouraged to explore other issues relating to the electoral process using the same strategy and approach. These issues may include:
  - Lowering the voting age
  - Setting fixed dates for elections
  - Allowing voting over the Internet.

Students may have some of their own ideas for other issues they would like to explore, research and debate.



#### Did You Know

Elections in Alberta can be called at the discretion of the government in power, within five years from the date they are elected. In some other provinces, such as British Columbia, election dates are set.



#### Integrate

##### Language Arts

**3.3 Organize information:** organize and develop ideas and information into oral, print or other media texts with introductions that interest audiences and state the topic, sections that develop the topic and conclusions.

**3.3 Evaluate information:** evaluate the appropriateness of information for a particular audience and purpose



#### Weblink

A **persuasion map** is a graphic organizer that can help students identify a position or opinion and organize supporting reasons, facts and examples around it. The map can be used as a starting point for the development of a persuasive essay or position statement.

An electronic version of a persuasion map that students can use as a starting point is found at [www.readwritethink.org/materials/persuasion\\_map/](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/persuasion_map/). Students can be required to check the outline they create on this organizer with a peer review group or with their teacher.



#### Differentiate & Share

Students can be provided with options in sharing their work. Smaller group presentation contexts encourage students to develop skills in more comfortable contexts.

- Students can share with a partner. Have partners develop questions they can ask of each other.
- Students can present their work to a small group, taking turns presenting their opinions and evidence.
- Students can practice a presentation with a partner or small group, then present to the whole class.

## Assess & Reflect



Ask students to reflect individually on the value of participation with their families, school and communities.


The products that students create in this learning sequence provide an opportunity for assessment of students' understandings of participation and their own accountability, as well as that of individuals involved in governance.

These understandings should be assessed through an individual demonstration of learning. Evaluation should be based on individual student performance and gathered from a variety of sources of evidence to make a judgement of student performance using the descriptors of the **rubric (p. 98)**:

- Use evidence from students' T-Charts and Persuasion Maps to assess individual understandings of the importance of the electoral process and citizenship participation.
- Use observation evidence collected throughout the activities of the learning sequence to consider performance of process skills and group participation.
- Use the bookmarks or trading cards that students create to assess students' ability to apply strategies for participation.



## Find Out More

A chart that shows the provinces that hold elections on fixed election dates is provided in the *Building Future Voters CD* mini-library. 

### 2 What Matters

The roles and responsibilities of elected representatives and the interaction between representatives and their electorate provide opportunities for democratic participation.

- Ask students to revisit perspectives, ideas and examples they have encountered in their inquiry that are related to political and democratic participation. Provide students with **Student Resource 4-1: What Matters (pp. 103-105)**. Have them complete the personal action planner in the student resource.
- Revisit the graffiti walls created in Learning Sequence 1. Have students add different perspectives on democracy to their graffiti walls using speech bubbles or character dialogues. Encourage students to consider perspectives on democracy that are related to the electoral process, the roles and responsibilities of provincial government, voter participation and issues.
- Ask students to use the process outlined in the student resource to develop a personal commitment card. Provide students with blank index cards, or have them make their own on construction paper or cardstock.
- Invite students to work with a partner or small group to discuss what they learned about voter participation that was most compelling to them. Brainstorm strategies for encouraging adults to vote, either individually, in a group or as a class. (*Some common suggestions that students may offer include focus on educating new voters, get families talking about politics and elections at home, lower the voting age, get candidates and political parties to talk about issues that are important for young people.*)
- Ask students to use the strategies provided as a starting point for developing bookmarks or trading cards that encourage citizens to vote. Provide students with the **Bookmark Template (p. 143)** or **Trading Card Template (p. 144)**. Their products should include slogans, visuals, messages or action statements that focus on the benefits of being involved in the electoral process.





## Share

Consider ways that students can be encouraged to share their bookmarks with potential voters in the community. Laminate the products and share them at community events, parent council meetings or parent nights at the school.

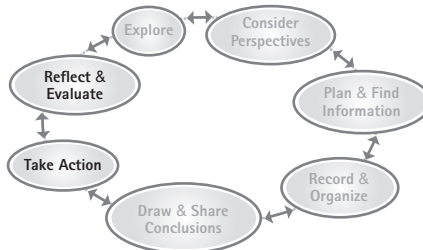
Consider ways that you can share strategies for “encouraging the vote” with a Returning Officer.

- Inform the Returning Officer of your students’ work. Through Elections Alberta, invite them to come to the classroom to talk to students about voter participation.
- Send examples of bookmarks or trading cards that the class selects for display in the community during an election year.



## Make It Matter - Class Action Project

- Provide time for students to continue to implement their class project. If students are completing their projects, have them reflect on the impact they think their actions have had. If students are still implementing their projects, have them reflect on the effectiveness of their project work to date.
- Encourage the class to check in with each other by discussing and reflecting on questions such as the following:
  - ➔ What has most inspired us with our project work so far?
  - ➔ Who have we connected with? How have different perspectives changed or affected our project work?
  - ➔ What do we consider to be the most successful in the work we have done? Why is it successful? What challenges or barriers have we had to overcome?
- Use **Assess the Impact (p. 153)** to guide students through an assessment and reflection of their project work. Depending on the project and how much work students have completed, assign parts or all of the resource.



## Assess & Reflect

Have students reflect on what they have learned and how they have learned by responding to the following three statements:

- I liked learning about....because....
- I struggled when I was trying to learn....
- I didn't know that...





## 4 What matters after an election?

### 4-1 What Matters?

The electoral process is not finished after an election is complete. Individuals who are involved in an election, including Elections Alberta and the government, have important responsibilities to fulfil.

The work of Elections Alberta is also not finished when an election is over. The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for providing a report on the election as well as ensuring that the electoral process happens according to the laws set out by the *Election Act*.

After an election is over, the Returning Officer must prepare reports on the election and provide these reports to the Chief Electoral Officer. A Returning Officer's appointment expires four months after the election is over.

The Chief Electoral Officer is also responsible for exploring and identifying ways that the electoral process can be improved.

A democratic society is based on the belief that all citizens have a voice in decision-making about the ways we live together. One of the ways we do this is by holding elections to select our representatives. We also do this by encouraging individuals and groups to voice their opinions and act on them. We can write to newspapers, participate in action groups and contribute to community events.

Even though children cannot vote, they can participate in society in a number of ways. They can provide their opinions in public forums such as the media and the Internet. They can participate in youth groups and join political organizations. Increasingly, governments are working to ensure that youth voices are heard on issues that affect them.



#### Develop a Personal Action Plan

How will you make sure your voice is heard?

Every day you make decisions and take actions that affect others. Even by choosing not to participate in something, you are expressing yourself and affecting others. Think about how you want to participate and what impact you would like to have on your family, friends, school and communities.

Complete the action plan on the next page and make sure your voice is heard!



### Learning Log

Youth under the age of 18 cannot vote, so how do they get a say? How can they make sure that their ideas and concerns are heard?

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What opinions do you have about your citizenship and the responsibilities you have as a citizen?

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### Ideas for Action

- Make a commitment to vote by filling out a commitment card.
- Create a positive message or logo about participation and wear it on your t-shirt or baseball hat.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper.
- Run for student council
- Talk to your family about political decisions.
- Create a positive message to submit to the Elections Alberta website.

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■ Personal Action Planner

Actions I Would Like to Take	What I Need to Know	Possible Challenges and How I Might Overcome Them	How I Will Know I Am Successful



Make It Matter  
Future Voter Commitment Card

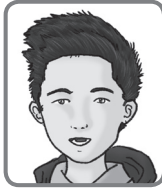
Future Voter Commitment Card



When I am 18 years old  
in \_\_\_\_\_, I will vote.  
(year)



Future Voter Commitment Card



When I am 18 years old  
in \_\_\_\_\_, I will vote.  
(year)



Learning Log

How will you participate in the democratic process? Will you vote when you are 18? Why?

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# Teacher Backgrounders

## TEACHER BACKGROUNDER 1

### Find Out More



Some of the information in this backgrounder is based on *The Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* 6th Edition, accessed at [www.assembly.ab.ca/pub/gdbook/CitizensGuide.pdf](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/pub/gdbook/CitizensGuide.pdf).

### Weblink



*Teaching Democracy: What Schools Need to Do*, by Joseph Kahne & Joel Westheimer is available at the weblink [www.democraticdialogue.com/DDpdfs/TeachingDemocracyPDK.pdf](http://www.democraticdialogue.com/DDpdfs/TeachingDemocracyPDK.pdf). This article presents a number of perspectives valuable in thinking about how to approach teaching democratic principles.

An online module on parliamentary democracy from Athabasca University can be accessed at [www.athabascau.ca/govn/parliamentary\\_democracy/introduction/options.html](http://www.athabascau.ca/govn/parliamentary_democracy/introduction/options.html).

Information on the provinces and territories, including federal-provincial relations, is available on the Canadian-Politics.com website at [www.canadian-politics.com/provinces/prov\\_assembly.shtml](http://www.canadian-politics.com/provinces/prov_assembly.shtml).

### An Overview of Government

People often use the term “government” to mean everything connected with making and enforcing laws, collecting taxes and providing public services. However, in our parliamentary system “government” has a very limited and specific meaning. It refers to the team of elected representatives that has the support of a majority in parliament or a provincial assembly. This majority government is responsible for providing leadership to make laws and for ministries that deliver programs and services mandated by those laws. In this system, government is also referred to as the cabinet.

### Provincial Government

The provincial equivalent of parliament is the legislature. Alberta's Legislature consists of a **unicameral** house called the Legislative Assembly, and the Lieutenant Governor. Like their federal counterparts, the premier and cabinet are from the same political party – the one with the most elected members in the Assembly.

In the Legislature of Alberta, the monarch is represented by the **Lieutenant Governor**, the formal head of state. The premier and cabinet govern in the monarch's name. The Lieutenant Governor is the Queen's representative in Alberta. While the position is primarily ceremonial, the Lieutenant Governor has several duties, including opening and closing the legislature sessions and granting royal assent to bills passed by the government. A bill cannot become law without royal assent.

The Prime Minister appoints each Lieutenant Governor for a period of five years, and the federal government pays his or her salary. The Lieutenant Governor does not belong to a political party and does not favour one party or its policies over another's.

The **bicameral**, or two-house system that provides the structure of government at the federal level originated in Great Britain. The British Parliament evolved into an elected House of Commons and the appointed House of Lords in the 14th century. In Canada, this is equivalent to the House of Commons and the Senate.

Each provincial legislature consists of a unicameral legislature with an elected assembly. Holding elections in which ordinary citizens elect representatives to a parliament is also part of Canada's British heritage. Local village leaders were called to parliament as early as the 13th century, although voting rights were extended to the middle and working classes only in the 19th and 20th centuries and to women in the 20th century.



## Responsible Government

The Canadian system of government is based on the British principle of responsible government, which means that the cabinet must have the support of a majority in the elected Assembly to continue governing. This establishes a system in which the government is **responsible**, or accountable, to the Assembly. If a major policy or law is defeated, the government must resign and call an election.

Responsible government has always been part of the Canadian system, but the concept of responsible government came from Britain. It began in Britain in 1742, when the first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, resigned after two of his major policies were defeated in the Commons.

In the Canadian system of responsible government, the areas of proposing, passing and administering laws overlap. The premier and **cabinet**, or executive branch, are the chief lawmakers. The **premier** is the leader of the party commanding a majority of support of elected members in the Assembly while cabinet ministers are appointed **Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)** from that party. The **executive branch** consists of appointed members of the legislative branch.

Ministers propose most of the laws that pass, and they vote on them along with their fellow MLAs. As well, ministers are responsible for administering government ministries and the laws guiding them.

When a political party has majority support or commands a majority, the party holds more than half of the seats in the Assembly. In this case, the government formed is called a **majority government**. In Alberta's parliamentary system, majority governments tend to be stable because voting on major government initiatives such as bills and budgets normally occurs along party lines. The defeat of a major government initiative would mean the downfall of the government. Therefore, party unity is usually necessary for the government to remain in office. Consequently, party discipline, under which all MLAs from the same party support their party's policies in the Assembly, is a tradition in the parliamentary system.

A party may also be said to command a majority if it holds fewer than half the seats in the Assembly provided that enough members from opposition parties support its major initiatives to ensure that they pass. This is called a **minority government**. If one of its major initiatives is defeated, the government must resign, usually resulting in an election call. Minority governments rely on compromise with members from other parties, so their bills and spending priorities may represent a consensus of different parties' ideas. Thus opposition members in a minority government usually have more influence on government business than they do with a majority government.

### Direct Democracy

Direct democracy is a system of government in which voters can directly repeal, amend or initiate policies and laws through binding referendums. Switzerland provides a good example of a country that practices direct democracy in establishing laws and policies. Swiss voters can challenge laws or policies through petition and referendum. The result of referendum voting is binding on the government.



### Find Out More

#### Weblink

A comprehensive history of the vote is available on the Elections Canada website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

The CBC Archives provide a number of video clips and articles that deal with the history of the vote on the *Voting in Canada: How a Privilege Became a Right* weblink, found at [http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-73-1450/politics\\_economy/voting\\_rights/](http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-73-1450/politics_economy/voting_rights/)

Perspectives on voting and citizenship, including historical and youth perspectives, can be found on the Historica Voices weblink at [www.historica.ca/voices/index.do](http://www.historica.ca/voices/index.do). Some students may require assistance in accessing the content of this website.



### Weblink

An excellent website that describes direct democracy in Switzerland is available at [www.swissworld.org/dvd\\_rom/direct\\_democracy\\_2005/index.html](http://www.swissworld.org/dvd_rom/direct_democracy_2005/index.html). This website provides a number of examples and illustrations. Students will find this website challenging but parts of it may be suitable for whole class demonstration and discussion.

## TEACHER BACKGROUNDERS 2

### Find Out More



Some of the information in this backgrounder is based on *The Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* 6th Edition, accessed at [www.assembly.ab.ca/pub/gdbook/CitizensGuide.pdf](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/pub/gdbook/CitizensGuide.pdf).

### Weblink



The *Constitution Act of 1867* can be accessed on the Department of Justice website at [http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/c1867\\_e.html](http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/c1867_e.html).

The website of the current provincial government in Alberta can be accessed at <http://alberta.ca/home/>. A comprehensive overview of departments and policies can be explored on this website.

A list of links to cabinet and ministries appointed in March 2008 can be accessed at <http://alberta.ca/home/ministries.cfm>. Each ministry link provides a list of responsibilities, an overview of the minister and a letter from the premier that outlines the priorities and responsibilities of the ministry. Students can use this site, but some may require support in accessing and interpreting information.

### Responsibilities of Provincial Government

The provinces' areas of responsibility as defined in the *Constitution Act 1867* (previously the *British North America Act 1867*) include health, child welfare, municipal government, transportation, labour, property and civil rights, and education.

Each provincial government makes decisions regarding how it will carry out these responsibilities. This is often done by establishing **government ministries**, or departments, that look after each area of responsibility.

The provincial government also takes responsibility for its environment and resources. It has to look after its own **finances**, which include taxation and budgeting. The provincial government also provides many different services for the residents of the province, such as issuing birth certificates, making sure the public is safe and enforcing the laws.

Government ministries often look after consistent areas of responsibility, but they may change when the government in power changes. Ministries can also change when the leadership of the political party with the majority in the Assembly changes.

Students should be made aware that these departments reflect the approach of a political party to government, but also provide insight into what every provincial government in power must take responsibility for.

The following list provides a general overview of some main areas of responsibility of government ministries in place in March 2008. Students should also be made aware that the description of responsibilities that follows is excerpted from the government's current website and reflects the policies of this government.

#### ■ Alberta Aboriginal Relations

- Works with Aboriginal communities and other partners to enhance social and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people in Alberta.
- Works with other government departments to support the development of programs and policies that affect Aboriginal people in Alberta.
- Advises and sometimes leads agreements between the provincial government and Aboriginal groups.
- Administers Métis Settlements legislation.
- Helps resolve Aboriginal land-based issues.
- Coordinates First Nation land and resource development consultations.

#### ■ Advanced Education and Technology

*Apprenticeship and Industry Training:*

- Develops program standards with industry.

- Counsels apprentices and employers.
- Provides funding for approved programs.
- Certifies learners.

*Adult Learning:*

- Funds education providers, including research.
- Provides student financial assistance.
- Approves programs of study.
- Licenses and certifies education providers.

*Technology:*

- Provides strategic leadership for science and research in Alberta.
- Manages and funds investments in science and research in three priority areas: energy research, information and communications technology, and life sciences.
- Facilitates technology commercialization and development to build knowledge-intensive industries in Alberta.

## ■ Agriculture and Rural Development

- Encourages industry growth by:
  - ➔ facilitating new and diversified primary and value-added food and non-food products
  - ➔ promoting enhanced livestock health
  - ➔ working to increase market access for agriculture and food industry products
  - ➔ improving food industry business services, including access to capital, risk management tools, business and entrepreneurial processes, and enhanced infrastructure.
- Facilitates rural and environmental sustainability through maintaining or improving Alberta's air, water and soil through essential policy, legislation, information and services related to soil conservation, water quality, range management, climate change and biodiversity.
- Provides risk management programs and funding to allow farmers the opportunity to adopt the most viable management practices for their area.
- Promotes and ensures appropriate and safe food production and processing practices throughout the supply chain, including the use of science-based surveillance programs.
- Monitors the adoption and implementation of food safety process control systems for, and in partnership with, the agriculture and food industry and other government partners.
- Takes responsibility for rural development.



### Find Out More

The Canadian Encyclopedia provides an overview of the responsibilities and powers of provincial government, including an historical perspective. The article can be found at [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006533](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006533).

## ■ Children and Youth Services

Provides supports to Alberta's children, youth and families by:

- Helping them to be safe from abuse and neglect and focusing on improved outcomes for children in care
- Working to prevent family violence and bullying
- Continuing to work with child care professionals, parents, businesses and other stakeholders to ensure Albertans have access to quality, affordable child care options
- Encouraging, involving and supporting communities to deliver services to children, youth and families.

## ■ Culture and Community Spirit

Takes responsibility for:

- Culture
- Community development
- The voluntary sector
- Museums and heritage sites.

Takes responsibility for the following commissions and foundations:

- Human Rights and Citizenship Commission
- Human Rights Citizenship and Multiculturalism Fund
- Foundation for the Arts
- Alberta Historical Resources Foundation
- Wild Rose Foundation
- Government House Foundation.

## ■ Education

- Develops curriculum and sets standards.
- Evaluates curriculum and assesses outcomes.
- Manages teacher development and certification.
- Supports special needs students.
- Funds and supports school boards.
- Administers Aboriginal and francophone education.
- Manages the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI).
- Oversees basic education policy and regulations.

## ■ Employment and Immigration

- Helps Albertans train for as well as find and keep employment.

- Provides financial and health benefits, child support services and employment training support to Albertans in need.
- Contributes to workplaces that are safe, healthy, fair, and stable for employees and employers.
- Promotes awareness and understanding of women's issues.

### ■ **Energy**

- Secures Albertans' share and benefits from energy and mineral resource development.
- Ensures Alberta's energy and mineral resources remain competitive, and attractive to investment and development.
- Increases Albertans' awareness of energy and mineral resource development and related policies, and the significance of these resources to Alberta's economy.
- Ensures Alberta consumers have a choice of reliable and competitively priced energy.
- Researches biofuels and their use.

### ■ **Environment**

- Strives to safeguard public and environmental health.
- Helps Albertans become even better environmental stewards.
- Supports and maintains stringent environmental rules.
- Addresses cumulative environmental effects.
- Manages Alberta's water quality and quantity through Alberta's Water for Life strategy.
- Leads Alberta's response to climate change.

### ■ **Executive Council**

- Is led by the Deputy Minister of Executive Council.
- Comprises Policy and Coordination, Protocol, Deputy Secretary to Cabinet, and the Public Affairs Bureau.
- Provides:
  - ➔ Support to the premier and members of Executive Council in strategic and business planning and policy coordination leadership to the Alberta Public Service
  - ➔ Programs for senior international visitors, provincial government ceremonial events, and protocol advice through the Protocol Office
  - ➔ Procedures for decision making and administrative support to Executive Council (cabinet), its members and committees, and support to the Alberta Order of Excellence Council and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor
  - ➔ Government with two-way communication with Albertans, and communications support to Government of Alberta ministries through the Public Affairs Bureau.

### ■ **Public Affairs Bureau**

- Provides communications support for government.
- Facilitates two-way communication with Albertans about issues that are important to them.

### ■ **Finance and Enterprise**

- Coordinates the provincial budget process.
- Facilitates fiscal planning, economic forecasting and decision-making.
- Manages long-term tax, revenue and investment policy and programs.
- Administers the regulations affecting pension plans, insurance and financial institutions.
- Oversees financial assets and liabilities.
- Manages risk associated with liability exposure and loss of public assets.
- Regulates and supports Alberta's capital market.
- Takes responsibility for:
  - ➔ The Regulatory Review Secretariat
  - ➔ Alberta Economic Development Authority
  - ➔ The Northern Alberta Development Council.

### ■ **Health and Wellness**

- Promotes health and wellness and strategies for preventing injury and illness.
- Provides support for managing addictions.
- Builds a contemporary, responsive, sustainable and flexible health system.

### ■ **Housing and Urban Affairs**

- Takes responsibility for housing services, including:
  - ➔ The Alberta Social Housing Corporation
  - ➔ Homelessness Secretariat.

### ■ **Infrastructure**

- Takes responsibility for:
  - ➔ Infrastructure planning, and building and managing government-owned infrastructure
  - ➔ The administration of water/wastewater and other municipal infrastructure grants
  - ➔ The Natural Gas Rebate Program.

## ■ International and Intergovernmental Relations

- Promotes the interests of and secures benefits for Alberta:
  - As an equal partner in a revitalized, united Canada
  - From strengthened international relations
  - From greater trade and investment liberalization, domestically and internationally.
- Markets the province internationally, encourages export and trade development in targeted industry sectors and provides direction and support to ten of Alberta's international offices, including:
  - Strategic market intelligence
  - Creating partnerships, networks and alliances
  - Identifying opportunities for Alberta businesses in targeted foreign markets
  - Showcasing Alberta nationally and internationally.
- Takes responsibility for attracting investments in Alberta.

## ■ Justice and Attorney General

- Prosecutes criminal and other offences.
- Provides access to the courts and other dispute-resolution processes.
- Provides corporate advice and legal services to government ministries.
- Supports and protects vulnerable Albertans, such as those who depend on court-ordered maintenance payments, who are unable to protect their financial interests, or who cannot afford legal counsel.

## ■ Municipal Affairs

- Assists municipalities in providing accountable and effective local government to Albertans.
- Administers a safety system that strives to ensure appropriate safety standards for the construction and maintenance of buildings and equipment.
- Co-ordinates a comprehensive, cross-government all-hazards approach to managing emergencies in the province through the Alberta Emergency Management Agency.
- Conducts hearings, renders decisions and/or provides recommendations to cabinet on matters defined under the *Municipal Government Act* through the independent, quasi-judicial Municipal Government Board.
- Manages 2.8 million acres of public land in the Special Areas and provides municipal services to the dryland region in eastern Alberta through the Special Areas Board.

## ■ **Seniors and Community Supports**

- Offers financial benefits, housing and other programs for senior citizens.
- Administers the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program (AISH).
- Provides community-based supports for Albertans with developmental disabilities.
- Fosters the inclusion and independence of seniors and Albertans with disabilities through policy development and programs like Alberta Aids to Daily Living.

## ■ **Service Alberta**

- Provides licensing and registry services for consumer, business, and property transactions.
- Delivers shared services to ministries such as mail delivery, printing and copying documents, technical support for computers, telephones and faxes.
- Supports, regulates, and enforces high standards of consumer protection and business practices in the Alberta marketplace.
- Works with ministries to achieve cost savings in information technology and business processes, and reduced duplication of services across ministries.
- Provides information management and privacy support to public bodies in administering Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.
- Streamlines processes and promotes innovation in providing seamless, secure, and accessible services to Albertans.
- Ensures computers systems across government operate in the same way, protecting Albertans' personal information, providing online security and saving money through efficient procurement practices.
- Manages government vehicles and air transportation.
- Leverages Alberta SuperNet, a province-wide, high-speed network to connect Albertans with government, learning and health services and to enable rural development across Alberta.

## ■ **Solicitor General and Public Security**

- Ensures safe communities through policing and promotion of crime-prevention activities.
- Supports victims of crime during police investigations and criminal court proceedings.
- Maintains correctional and rehabilitation programs.

## ■ **Sustainable Resource Development**

- Ensures Alberta's public lands, including rangelands, are healthy, productive and sustainable.
- Protects Alberta's forests and forest communities from wildfires.
- Supports healthy ecosystems and communities in Alberta's forests and forest communities.



- Manages Alberta’s forests to support a competitive and sustainable forest sector.
- Ensures Alberta’s fish and wildlife resources and their habitats are healthy, productive and sustainable.
- Oversees resource development and confined operations to meet the public interest.

### ■ **Tourism, Parks and Recreation**

- Facilitates tourism marketing, development and film investment.
- Manages provincial parks and protected areas.
- Promotes recreational and sports opportunities.

### ■ **Transportation**

- Takes responsibility for planning, building and managing the provincial highway network, including the administration of municipal transportation grants.
- Takes responsibility for the Transportation Safety Board.

### ■ **Treasury Board**

This ministry includes a Secretariat, separate from Finance, which supports the Minister as Chair of Treasury Board. Corporate Human Resources is part of this ministry and provides advice on human resource administration to other provincial government departments:

- Coordinates provincial government job postings.
- Develops human resource strategies and provides expert consulting to departments on pay, benefits, classification, labour relations, workplace health and staffing.
- Supports human resource planning, employee attraction and retention, and corporate employee development.
- Helps build productive workplaces by advancing employee engagement, performance management and capacity building strategies.
- Delivers a corporate executive search program to attract and recruit executive managers and senior officials to the provincial government, and offers search consulting services to significant provincial government agencies, boards and commissions.
- Develops and delivers valuable and high-quality learning opportunities on a wide range of topics to provincial government employees, and offers consultation and research services to ministries in the areas of learning needs assessment, course and program design and evaluation through the Government of Alberta Learning Centre.

## Find Out More



The Elections Alberta website provides a search function that allows you to obtain information on electoral divisions and search for MLAs by first or last name. This link can be accessed at [www.elections.ab.ca/streetkey/index.cfm](http://www.elections.ab.ca/streetkey/index.cfm).

Information on MLAs can also be found in the telephone directory under Government of Alberta or by calling the legislature information line at 427-2826. They will let you know your MLA's name, address and telephone number. This information is also easily accessed online at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca).

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) represent all of the people who live in the electoral division in which they were elected, whether those people are eligible to vote, voted for another candidate or did not vote at all. MLAs are responsible for helping their constituents with problems or concerns.

In the Legislative Assembly, MLAs share the views of their constituents by introducing bills and debating and discussing concerns with other MLAs. An MLA communicates with other elected members and various government ministries. MLAs perform most of their duties in their constituencies. Here they listen to the problems, questions, ideas and opinions of the people who live in the electoral division they represent.

MLAs also deal with **special-interest groups**, which are organizations and groups that promote specific views and actions. Groups and organizations that are concerned about the environment, child care, health, drunk driving, education can meet with an MLA, who may support their cause by proposing a new law or resolution in the Legislative Assembly or by writing a letter to a government ministry.

In addition to meeting with their constituents, MLAs spend time becoming informed about matters of public interest, preparing speeches and going to meetings to talk about policies and issues.

MLAs often have to take a stand on issues and decisions, and the perspective or view they support depends on the platforms of the political party to which they belong, their constituents' points of view and their own personal beliefs. Through public meetings, day-to-day contact and local media forums, MLAs gather information from as many constituents as possible. They then discuss the issue in private meetings, called **caucus meetings**, with other MLAs from the same party.

The caucus members decide as a group what their party's position will be. Voting in the Assembly tends to be along party lines, according to what the caucus decided beforehand. However, MLAs may vote as they see fit rather than according to their caucus's position. If some MLAs feel that the caucus's position does not reflect what their constituents want or that it would not be beneficial to the people who live and work in their electoral division, they can, and sometimes do, speak against the position of their caucus.

**Cabinet ministers** are MLAs who are in charge of specific government ministries and can influence ministry policies and programs. Ministers may remain as ministers but not MLAs when the Legislative Assembly has been dissolved for an election. As well as representing their constituents, ministers are ultimately responsible for the policies and actions of the ministry they lead.

**Private government members** are often called **backbenchers** because in the Legislative Assembly they sit in the back rows, behind the cabinet ministers. However, the correct term for any member who is not in cabinet is "private member." A private government member is an MLA who belongs to the governing party.

Private members sit on cabinet policy committees and can sponsor government **bills**, proposals for laws that will be discussed and debated before becoming law.

In addition, private government members, as well as opposition members, introduce their own bills. These are called **private bills**.

The role of an **opposition party** is to analyze and critique government activity, propose improvements and present itself to the public as an alternative to the party in power. Opposition parties often assign some of their MLAs to be critics of specific departments. Together, opposition critics are called a **shadow cabinet**. For example, an environment critic discusses issues with the Minister of Environment, suggests alternative policies and priorities and keeps these issues public. Opposition critics, like the ministers they shadow, hear concerns and ideas from various persons and interest groups from anywhere in the province.

### ■ Committees of the Legislative Assembly

MLAs also serve on various committees. Committees of the Legislative Assembly are made up of MLAs from all parties. When it is in session, the whole Legislative Assembly, which includes all MLAs, meets to study the details of proposed laws and spending programs.



### Did You Know

MLAs may also be part of smaller committees studying more specific issues. Standing committees of the Assembly involve MLAs from all parties represented in the Legislative Assembly.

Citizens may attend these meetings, and transcripts of their proceedings are posted on the Legislative Assembly's website, [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca).

The chair of each standing or special committee presents a report to the Assembly. Reports usually include what the committee found and what they would like the Assembly to do. The Assembly does not have to do what a report recommends, but if it does, the government introduces a bill or motion containing the recommendations.



### Did You Know

There are many different individuals and groups that a minister has to deal with. For example, the Minister of Energy must be responsible to constituents as well as deal with all matters related to that ministry. Below is a partial list of people who the Minister of Energy might have to deal with:

- Technical staff in the Department of Energy and the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
- Natural gas, oil, electricity, mineral and petrochemical developers, producers and retailers
- Transporters of energy (e.g., pipelines, electrical transmission)
- Environmental and other nongovernment organizations
- Advocates of alternative energy sources
- Technical experts in industry and academia
- Committees and other groups formed to address energy matters
- MLAs from opposition parties, particularly the critics of the Energy department
- Energy and mining representatives from federal, provincial or territorial and municipal governments
- People in the energy field from other countries
- Representatives from the media
- Individual consumers and taxpayers from across the province.

### ■ **Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Is responsible for reviewing the fund's business plan, monitoring its quarterly performance and ensuring that the mission of the fund is being fulfilled.

### ■ **Legislative Offices**

Meets throughout the year to discuss the budgets and other aspects of five legislative offices:

- The Auditor General monitors government spending.
- The Ombudsman responds to concerns about how citizens have been treated by government agencies.
- The Chief Electoral Officer conducts elections.
- The Ethics Commissioner helps MLAs avoid conflicts of interest.
- The Information and Privacy Commissioner deals with concerns related to providing information under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

### ■ **Public Accounts**

Meets regularly during session and may also meet outside of session. This watchdog committee reviews government spending for the previous year and questions cabinet ministers about these expenditures.

### ■ **Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Meets when the Assembly refers an issue to it. This committee deals mainly with matters of privilege. Privilege means the rights members have because they are MLAs, such as the right to express a controversial view in the Assembly without being sued or prosecuted. In addition, the committee keeps the Standing Orders up to date and may recommend changes to them. This committee is essentially a House rules committee.

### ■ **Private Bills**

Meets during session to consider all private bills before the Assembly. A private bill is a bill brought forward by an individual or group that affects only that individual or group. The committee discusses each bill and recommends whether the Assembly should pass it or not.

### ■ **Community Services**

Mandate relates to the areas of health, education, children's services, seniors, supports for the disabled, tourism, parks, recreation and culture.

### ■ **Government Services**

Mandate relates to the areas of government services, government organization, personnel administration, expenditure management, capital planning, revenue, justice, international and intergovernmental affairs, trade, aboriginal affairs, policing and security.

## ■ **Managing Growth Pressures**

Mandate relates to the areas of postsecondary education, technology, human resources, labour, immigration, rural development, municipal affairs, affordable housing, libraries, infrastructure and transportation.

## ■ **Resources and Environment**

Mandate relates to the areas of energy, the environment, agriculture, sustainable resources and forestry.

## ■ **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Sets Members' salaries, pensions and benefits and discusses related administrative matters.

Membership to the Assembly's standing committees is appointed on the second day of a new Legislature and reappointed on the first day of each new session of that Legislature. Membership to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services is appointed on the second day of the first session of a new Legislature for the duration of the life of that particular Legislature.

## ■ **Special Committees of the Assembly**

Special committees are appointed by the Assembly to deal with special issues that may come up only once. Like standing committees, special committees are made up of MLAs from all parties represented in the Assembly.

### **Electoral Boundaries**

In 1991 the province had to make major revisions to Alberta's electoral districts, so the Assembly decided to ask for suggestions from the public. The Electoral Boundaries Committee held public hearings all over the province, and many Albertans presented their ideas. The Electoral Boundaries Committee differs from the Electoral Boundaries Commission, which is formed every time the boundaries are reviewed and is composed of appointed commissioners rather than MLAs.

### ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act***

This all-party committee was established in November 2002 to seek input and make recommendations on any needed changes to the Act.

### ***Personal Information Protection Act***

This 11-member committee was struck during the 2005 spring sitting with an 18-month mandate to review the *Personal Information Protection Act*. The Act protects individual privacy by requiring private-sector organizations to obtain consent for the collection, use and disclosure of personal information in most cases and provides individuals with a right of access to their own personal information.

## Find Out More



Some of the information in this backgrounder is based on *The Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* 6th Edition, accessed at [www.assembly.ab.ca/pub/gdbook/CitizensGuide.pdf](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/pub/gdbook/CitizensGuide.pdf).

## Find Out More



The *Election Act* is the main legislation that guides the conduct of elections in Alberta. It sets out all the rules and procedures that must be followed to ensure that elections are fair and impartial. Elections Alberta is responsible for making sure the *Election Act* is followed. They must remain independent from any political party or government in power. The *Election Act* and other election-related legislation can be accessed on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca/legislation.html](http://www.elections.ab.ca/legislation.html).

## Weblink



Students can search for their electoral division on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca/streetkey/](http://www.elections.ab.ca/streetkey/).

# TEACHER BACKGROUNDER 3

## Provincial General Elections

Canada's Constitution requires that provincial elections be held at least once every five years, but they are usually held approximately every four years.

A government that waits until the end of its legal term to call an election runs the risk of being forced to call one at a time that may not be as advantageous politically, therefore reducing its chances of winning. Conversely, governments that take advantage of favourable political conditions by calling an election too soon—a snap election—risk criticism. Governments normally look for a combination of an upsurge of popularity at the polls and the winding down of their mandate to call an election. Holding an election is a complex affair, beginning well before the premier formally asks the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislative Assembly.

## Electoral Divisions

The difficult decisions involved in an election are not all made by voters. One of these decisions involves how to divide the province into voting districts, or electoral divisions, each of which has one MLA.

Alberta is divided into 83 constituencies. One Member of the Legislative Assembly represents each electoral division, and that member represents everyone within the electoral division's boundaries, regardless of how they voted in the last election or whether they voted at all.

Electoral division boundary lines change about every ten years and are normally determined by a special body called the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission is made up of a chairperson appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and four members (commissioners) appointed by the Speaker: two on the recommendation of the Premier and two on the recommendation of the Leader of the Official Opposition in consultation with the other opposition leader or leaders. A boundaries commissioner must have a thorough knowledge of electoral law combined with an understanding of the needs and wishes of the people who live in the electoral division. The commission draws the boundaries mainly on the basis of population but also considers common community interests, the geographical area, natural boundaries such as rivers, political boundaries such as county lines and city limits as well as other factors. Its decisions are guided by a law called the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*. When the commission changes boundaries, the changes must become law before they can take effect.

## Running an Election

The complex task of running a provincial general election belongs to Elections Alberta, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. This office must do the following:

- Divide electoral divisions into polling subdivisions
- Update the Lists of Electors, which may include a full or partial enumeration to collect voters' names by going door to door
- Train Returning Officers to run the election
- Make sure voting is conducted according to the rules
- Take care of all election paperwork
- Issue the official election results.

## First-Past-the-Post

In Canadian elections winners are chosen through the single-member plurality system, or “**first-past-the-post**.” In other words, the candidate winning the most votes in an electoral division is the winner, even if he or she received less than 50% of the “**popular vote**,” which is the total number of votes cast.

Another voting system used by some democracies is **proportional representation**, in which parties win seats according to the percentage of the total votes cast in their favour. There are many countries using this system, including Germany, Switzerland and Ireland.

## Political Parties

When a group of people have similar ideas about the major issues affecting people in a democratic society, they may form a political party with a view to electing some of their people to office and therefore having a better chance of putting their ideas into practice.

Members of a political party can influence politicians and governments when policies are being formed or reviewed. In an election campaign, candidates usually concentrate on promoting policies that are already in place. Young adults can get involved by joining a party's youth association. Alberta's major political parties include the Progressive Conservatives, the Liberals, and the New Democrats. The Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals have their roots in the 19th century, while the New Democratic Party was born in the 20th century. The same parties are prominent in federal politics and also in the politics of other provinces. Many parties have both federal and provincial wings, and each wing can have its own members and select its own candidates.

Political parties begin the work of choosing candidates long before an election. Each party tries to select, or **nominate**, one candidate to run in each electoral division. Candidates who don't belong to a political party are called **independents**.



## Find Out More

Information on political parties in Alberta can be accessed on Elections Alberta's website at [www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/603.htm](http://www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/603.htm). This information can also be found in the telephone directory under the political party's name.

## Making a Choice

Voters choose how to vote for a variety of reasons. They may vote for a candidate based strictly on individual qualifications. They may also vote for both the candidate and for the political party that candidate represents, unless the candidate is running as an independent. When deciding how to vote for a candidate in an election, it is important to listen not only to the candidate but also to the party leader. Party leaders will communicate what their party intends to do if they form a government while individual candidates may also focus on what they want for their electoral divisions.

Candidates will often go door to door during their campaigns. People seeking public office welcome questions. They are competing for votes and a chance to explain their party's policies. Voters should explore the issues that most concern them, and find out what their candidates and their parties plan to do about them. There are a variety of strategies voters can use to communicate with candidates and get involved in the electoral process:

- Talk to candidates and other individuals at their constituency associations or campaign headquarters.
- Find out how previously elected candidates handled issues in the past by reading copies of *Hansard*, which can be found on the Assembly's website at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) and is searchable by keyword. If voters know the important details about an issue, their questions are likely to be more to the point, and they will be better able to judge how much the candidates know about that particular issue.
- Attend public meetings, debates, forums and discussion groups in which candidates will be speaking. One of the best ways to find out about a party's election platform is for candidates in one electoral division get together to talk about issues and answer voters' questions. This is an opportunity to hear how potential MLAs would deal with issues and concerns.
- Listen to or take part in a phone-in program, watch candidates' panel discussions or read their statements on important issues in the media.

The media provides helpful sources of information about candidates and issues. Television, radio and newspapers all offer extensive coverage of election issues, the best of which involve the candidates themselves speaking on various matters.

## The Electoral Process in Alberta

An election officially begins when the government in power passes an **Order in Council** and the **Chief Electoral Officer** issues a **Writ of Election** to each **Returning Officer**.

The election period is a total of 28 days after the date of the Writ of Election. This means that voting day is on the 28th day. **Nomination Day**, the date by which all candidates must be nominated, is the 14th day after the date of the Writ of Election and **Polling Day**, the day on which voting takes place, is the 14th day after Nomination Day.

## Find Out More



The responsibilities of Election Officers are described on the Elections Alberta website at [www.electionsalberta.ab.ca/Public%20Website/597.htm](http://www.electionsalberta.ab.ca/Public%20Website/597.htm).

Information for candidates and political parties can be found at [www.electionsalberta.ab.ca/Public%20Website/political-participants.htm](http://www.electionsalberta.ab.ca/Public%20Website/political-participants.htm).

Changes to the List of Electors can also be made by electors using Voterlink at [www.voterlink.ab.ca](http://www.voterlink.ab.ca), an online voter registration service provided by Elections Alberta.



Each Returning Officer completes an **Election Proclamation**, which contains the following information:

- The place, dates and times fixed for revisions to the **Lists of Electors**
- The place and times fixed for nomination of candidates, and the date fixed for the closing of nominations
- The locations, dates and times for voting at the advance polls
- The date and times for voting
- The place, date and time for the announcement of the official results
- The name, address and phone number of the Returning Officer in the electoral division.

As soon as possible following the date of the Writ of Election, each Returning Officer publishes the information on the Election Proclamation, a map of the electoral division and a list of polling places. This information is published in one or more newspapers in each electoral division.

The Chief Electoral Officer provides copies of the Lists of Electors and polling subdivision maps to each registered political party. Each political party and candidate is entitled to receive this information. The same material is provided by the Returning Officer to independent candidates.

The Returning Officer can accept changes to the Lists of Electors, starting on the 5th day after the date of the Writ of Election and continuing each day, except Sundays and holidays. Changes can continue to be made until 4:00 p.m. on the Saturday before the opening of the advance polls.

These changes often include names of electors who:

- Were not included on the List of Electors
- Moved since the List of Electors was prepared
- Recently became eligible to vote .

A **candidate** is a person who is running for election in an electoral division. A candidate must file an Application for Registration of Candidate with Elections Alberta to begin to raise and spend money on his or her campaign and to begin campaigning. After the Writ of Election is issued and the candidate has registered, by filing a nomination paper with the Returning Officer, his or her name will appear on the ballot.

To be nominated, a candidate must be at least 18, a Canadian citizen and a six-month resident of the province. A person does not have to be ordinarily resident in an electoral division in order to be a candidate in that electoral division. A member of the Senate or House of Commons of Canada is not eligible to be nominated as a candidate.

Each candidate is required to appoint an elector as an **official agent**. The name, address and telephone number of the appointee must be on the Candidate Nomination Paper and is published by the Returning Officer in a newspaper of general circulation.



## Find Out More

Elections Alberta provides a number of detailed resources on the electoral process on their website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca).

Some of these resources include:

*A Guide for Polling Place Officials* (PDF). [www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/files/A\\_Guide\\_for\\_Polling\\_Place\\_Officials.pdf](http://www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/files/A_Guide_for_Polling_Place_Officials.pdf).

*Guidelines for the Selection of Returning Officers* (Document). [www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/files/Documents/Guidelines-for\\_RO\\_selection.doc](http://www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/files/Documents/Guidelines-for_RO_selection.doc).

*A Guide for Candidates on the Election Act* (PDF). [www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/files/Documents/Guide\\_for\\_Candidates\\_on\\_the\\_Election\\_Act.pdf](http://www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/files/Documents/Guide_for_Candidates_on_the_Election_Act.pdf).

*A Guide for Scrutineers* (PDF). [www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/files/Documents/A\\_guide\\_for\\_Scrutineers.pdf](http://www.elections.ab.ca/Public%20Website/files/Documents/A_guide_for_Scrutineers.pdf).

Persons appointed as official agents must be eligible to vote under the *Election Act*, but do not have to be a resident in the electoral division where their candidate is seeking office. The official agent must consent to the appointment by signing the Candidate Nomination Paper. A candidate cannot act as an official agent.

A **scrutineer** is a person who represents the candidates at each polling station. Scrutineers may watch election procedures in each polling station during polling hours as well as when the votes are unofficially counted after the polling station is closed.

Each candidate may appoint, in writing, not more than four resident electors for each polling station and Registration Officer's station as scrutineers. Not more than one scrutineer per candidate per ballot box or Registration Officer's station may be present at any one time. A scrutineer may attend more than one polling station or Registration Officer's station. Scrutineers must take the Oath of Secrecy at each polling station or Registration Officer's station before performing their duties.

There are four types of **polls** that are used to conduct voting in each electoral division:

- **Polling Day polls** are open from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election. Several polling stations can be located at one polling place.
- **Special ballot polls** are used for electors who are unable to vote on Polling Day or at an advance poll. Special ballot polls can be used by people with physical challenges, candidates, election officers, official agents or scrutineers. They may also be used by people who live in remote areas.
- **Advance polls** are established by the Returning Officer in each electoral division. These polls can be used by people with physical challenges and those who believe they will be absent from their polling station on Polling Day to vote in advance. Election officers, candidates, official agents or scrutineers can also use advance polls if their official duties may prevent them from voting at their own polling station on Polling Day. Advance polls are open from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday prior to Polling Day. The dates and locations are published by the Returning Officer in the Election Proclamation. All electors who wish to vote at an advance poll must complete an Advance Poll Declaration.
- **Mobile polls** can be established by the Returning Officer for places like seniors' and treatment centres. The hours for mobile poll voting are established by the Returning Officer, who consults with the staff at these centres.

The votes cast at all types of polls are counted after the close of polls on Polling Day. The *Election Act* allows a candidate to briefly visit polling places during polling hours, but campaigning is prohibited. Students and members of the media are also permitted to briefly visit polling places.

A **ballot** is a list of the candidate names that electors use to vote. Candidates' names are listed on the ballot in alphabetical order by their last name. Candidates' names cannot include titles, degrees, prefixes or suffixes. The name of the political party which the candidate represents appears directly below the

name of the candidate. If the candidate is not running for a political party, the word “Independent” is printed beneath the candidate’s name.

**Voting** involves the following process.

- The Deputy Returning Officer is responsible for obtaining each elector’s name and address.
- The Poll Clerk finds the elector’s name in the Poll Book beside a consecutive number. The Poll Clerk then draws a line through the elector’s name on the List of Electors, which is preprinted inside the Poll Book.
- The Deputy Returning Officer provides the ballot to each elector once their name has been found in or added to the Poll Book. The ballot is numbered with a corresponding number found in the Poll Book and the Deputy Returning Officer initials the back of the ballot.
- The Deputy Returning Officer then provides instructions to the voter to proceed to a polling booth and mark the ballot by placing an “X” in the circle opposite the name of the selected candidate. The ballot should then be folded and handed back to the Deputy Returning Officer once the elector has voted.
- When the voter is in the polling booth, no one else may enter or look into the booth to see the ballot. Voting is private and secret. Exceptions are made if the voter is physically unable to vote or cannot read the ballot. An elector may receive assistance after appropriate oaths are taken.
- Ballots may not be removed from the polling place. If a person declines to vote, the Deputy Returning Officer writes the word “Declined” on the ballot and places it in a separate envelope.
- The Deputy Returning Officer checks the ballot without unfolding it to ensure the number matches and it is the same ballot provided to the voter. The ballot is then placed in the ballot box after the stub with the identifying number is removed.
- The Poll Clerk marks the Poll Book to show the voter has voted.

## TEACHER BACKGROUNDER 4

### After the Election

The electoral process is not finished after an election is complete. Individuals who are involved in an election, including Elections Alberta and the government, have important responsibilities to fulfill.

The work of Elections Alberta is also not finished when an election is over. The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for providing reports as well as ensuring that the electoral process happens according to the laws set out by the *Election Act*.

The Chief Electoral Officer is required, by law, to prepare and file certain prescribed reports.

The Chief Electoral Officer submits an annual report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The report provides consolidated information from the financial statements of parties, constituency associations and candidates.

As required by the *Election Act*, the Chief Electoral Officer also submits a report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices following each enumeration, election, by-election, plebiscite and referendum. The report provides detailed information on each activity, and presents poll-by-poll results of the election.

After an election is over, the Returning Officer must prepare reports on the election and provide these reports to the Chief Electoral Officer. A Returning Officer's appointment expires four months after the election is over.

The Chief Electoral Officer is also responsible for exploring and identifying ways that the electoral process can be improved.

### The Issue of Voter Participation

The issues of low voter turnout and voter apathy in elections for all levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – has increasingly become a matter of concern for governments, politicians and many Canadians. The reasons are many – some based on opinion and some based on evidence and statistics. The sources that follow provide a sampling of perspectives and statistics on these issues from across Canada.

### Find Out More

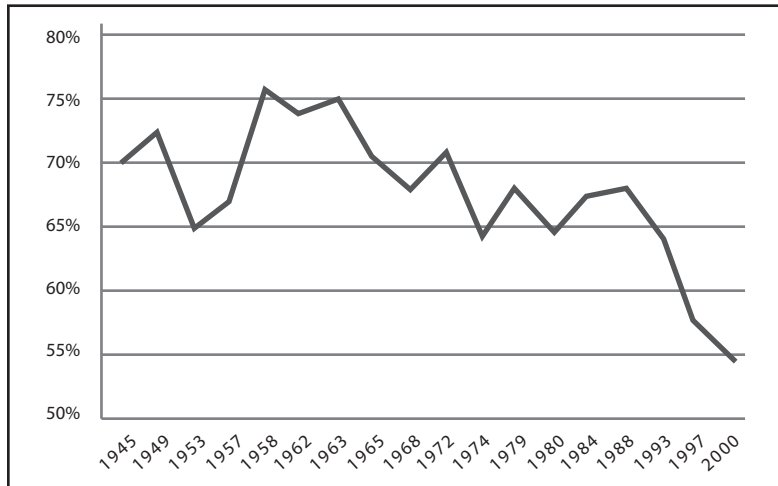


Elections Alberta provides a number of detailed reports on election results and statistics on their website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca).

Statistics Canada provides an overview of youth political participation in the following article:

Milan, Anne. (2005). "Willing to Participate: Political engagement of young adults." *Canadian Social Trends, Winter 2005*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. [www.statcan.ca/english/kits/pdf/social/political.pdf](http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/pdf/social/political.pdf).

**Figure 1 Canadian voter turnout (as a percentage of the voting age population)**



The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, online: <[www.idea.int/vt/region\\_view.efm?CountryCode=CA](http://www.idea.int/vt/region_view.efm?CountryCode=CA)>

Law Commission of Canada (2004). *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services (p. 39). [www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf](http://www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf).



## Find Out More

The Maple Leaf Web website provides a feature topic on *Voter Turnout in Canada* at [www.mapleleafweb.com/features/voter-turnout-canada](http://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/voter-turnout-canada). A variety of perspectives and statistics are provided on this link, including some from other countries.

*The Voter Almanac* link at [www.mapleleafweb.com/voter-almanac](http://www.mapleleafweb.com/voter-almanac) also provides statistics and information.

“... looking at each of the past two general elections, the number of people who did not vote at all was larger than the number of people who voted for the winning party. Now, we can rationalize these results with reference to political circumstances or social change, but at some stage we have to face up to the fact: something is going wrong here, and in a fundamental way. Casting a ballot is the most basic function of our democratic system. That so many Canadians chose not to do so is the political equivalent of the canary in the coalmine. It demonstrates graphically how high the stakes surrounding reform are—that far too many Canadians cannot be bothered to vote because they don’t think their vote matters.”

P. Martin, (December 2002–January 2003). *Policy Options at 11* (p. 1). In Law Commission of Canada (2004). “The Democratic Deficit” *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services (p. 4). [www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf](http://www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf).

“The heart of our citizenry, if one may so speak, is deeply troubled. Across the province, Quebecers are extremely disillusioned with politics. Their frustration with their powerlessness to influence decisions that affect their lives and those of their fellow citizens is palpable. One major source of disappointment is the voting system; citizens do not feel that their vote is truly and systematically reflected in the composition of the National Assembly.” [Translation]

Original source: Steering Committee of the Estates-General on the Reform of Democratic Institutions, *Prenez votre place! La participation citoyenne au coeur des institutions démocratiques québécoises* (Quebec, March 2003).

Law Commission of Canada (2004). *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services (p. 5). [www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf](http://www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf).

“Under our current voting system, our votes only count—or have impact on the allocation of seats—when we happen to share the most popular partisan viewpoint in our riding. In other words, what you believe in determines whether your vote counts—not the fact that you’re an equal citizen along with everyone else in your riding.”

*Make Every Vote Count* (2003), available from Fair Vote Canada. For contact information visit [www.fairvotecanada.org](http://www.fairvotecanada.org).

Law Commission of Canada (2004). *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services (p. 68).  
[www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf](http://www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf).

**Figure 2 Perceived Reasons Why Young People Less Likely to Vote (Open-ended; multiple responses)**

	Under 25 years (%)	25 years and older (%)
<b>Not Integrated</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>71</b>
Distanced from politics by age; not feeling represented, connected	40	37
Lack of information, understanding, knowledge	34	27
Lack of encouragement	2	4
Too busy, too mobile	3	3
<b>Disengagement</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>59</b>
Uninterested, apathetic	31	30
Negativism, cynicism, disillusionment	9	14
Distrustful of system, politicians	7	9
Irresponsibility, rebelliousness, laziness	4	6
<b>Other</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Do not know</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>*</b>

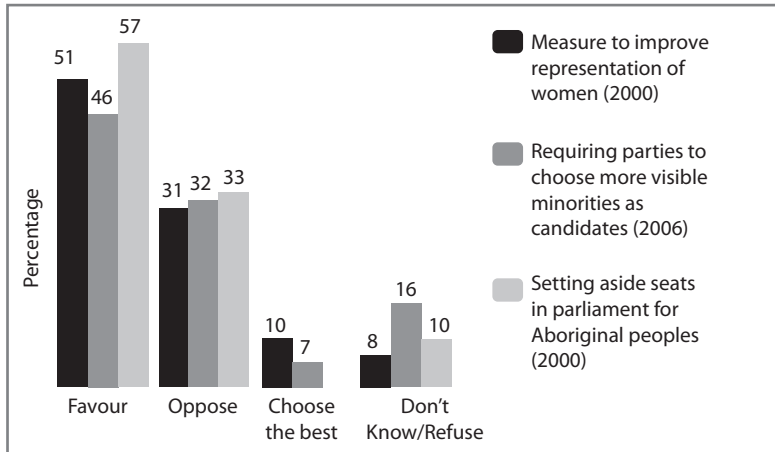
\*less than 1 percent.

J. Pammett and L. LeDuc (2003). “Confronting the Problem of Declining Voter Turnout Among Youth” 5:2 *Electoral Insight* at 6.

“Of particular concern in recent years has been the lack of youth participation in traditional political processes. For example, only about 25 percent of eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 24 cast ballots in the 2000 federal general election. Although there is a range of factors contributing to the non-participation of youth, including a lack of knowledge about politics and insufficient time to vote, there is evidence to suggest that many youths do not feel connected to the system of democratic governance, or that they lack interest in politics. [Figure 2], taken from a recent study completed in co-operation with Elections Canada, reveals some of the reasons that people provided when asked why young people did not vote in the 2000 election. As the table illustrates, one-third of people under the age of 25 cited disinterest and apathy as perceived reasons why youth did not vote, while two fifths suggested that not feeling represented or connected played a role in the decision not to vote.”

Law Commission of Canada (2004). *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services (p. 41).  
[www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf](http://www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf).

**Figure 3 Opinions of Canadians on measures to improve representation of various groups in parliament**



Adopted from P. Howe and D. Northrup (2000). "Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The Views of Canadians" *Policy Matters at 18–20* (pp. 1-5). The category "choose the best" refers to "choose the best candidate." It does not apply to seats for Aboriginal peoples.

Law Commission of Canada (2004). *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services (p. 63). [www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf](http://www.fairvotecanada.org/files/VotingCountsElectoralReformforCanada.pdf).

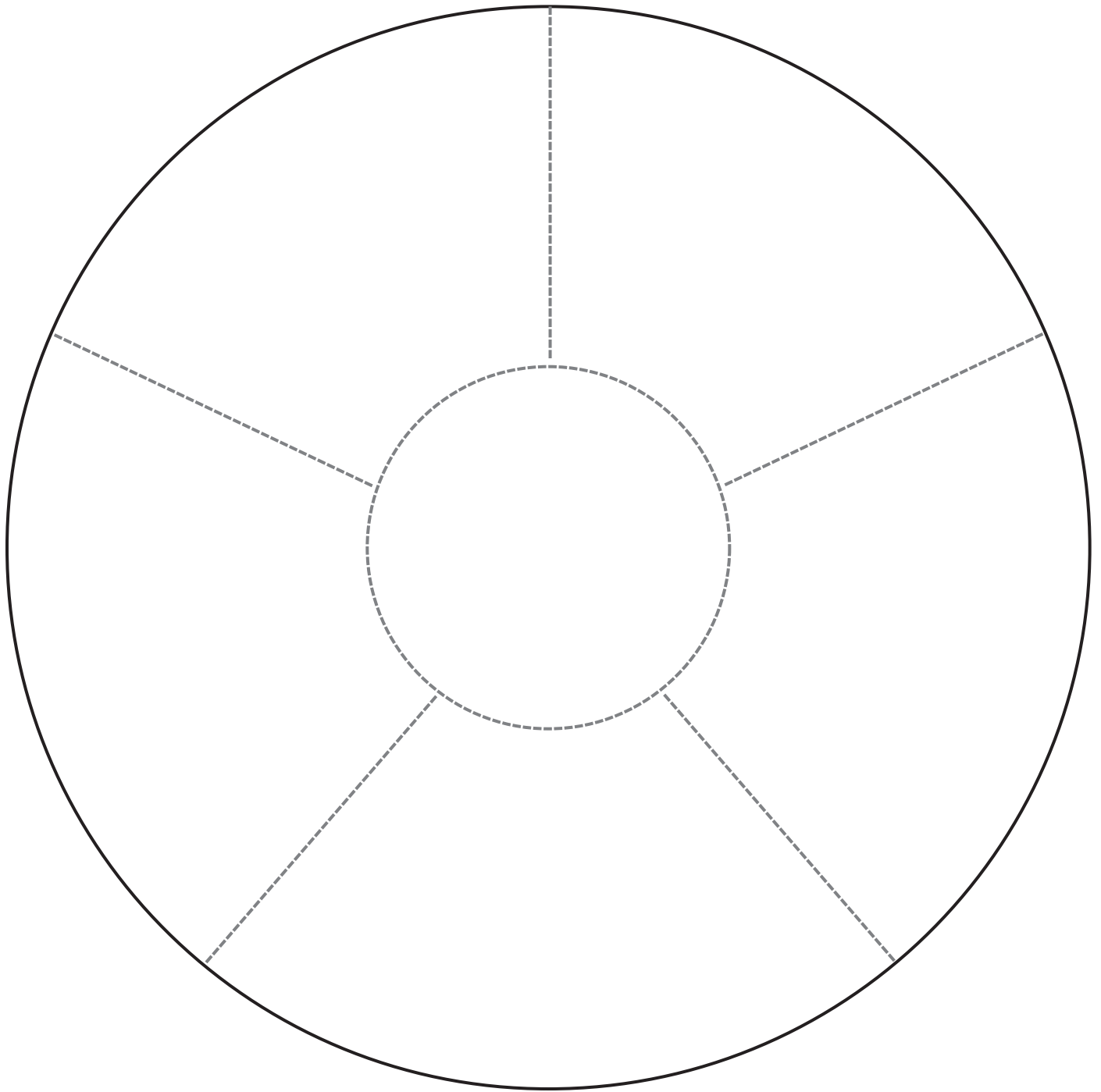




# Graphic Organizers

# T-Chart

# Wheel Chart

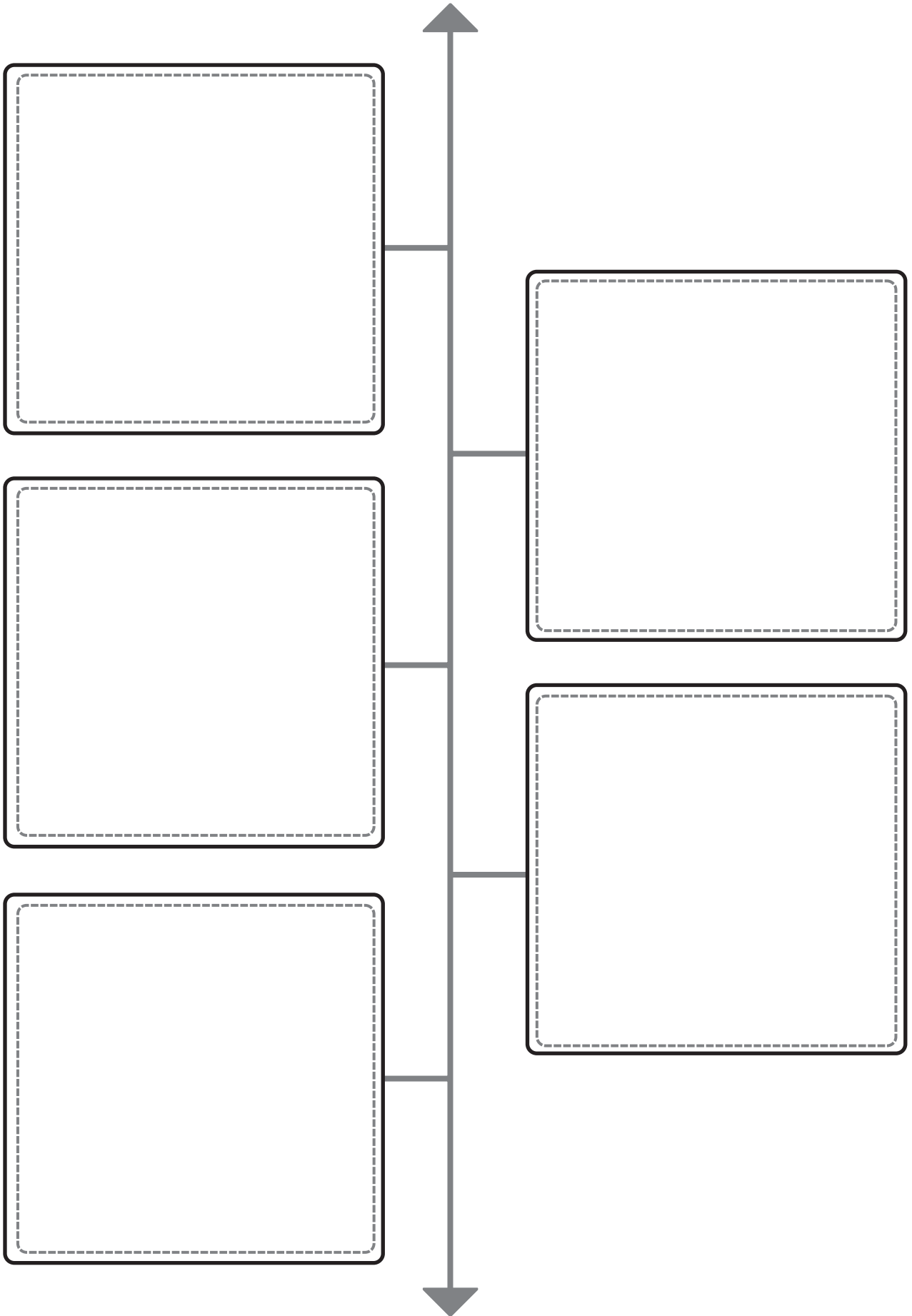


# KWL Chart

What I Know	What I Want to Know	How I Will Find Out	What I Learned

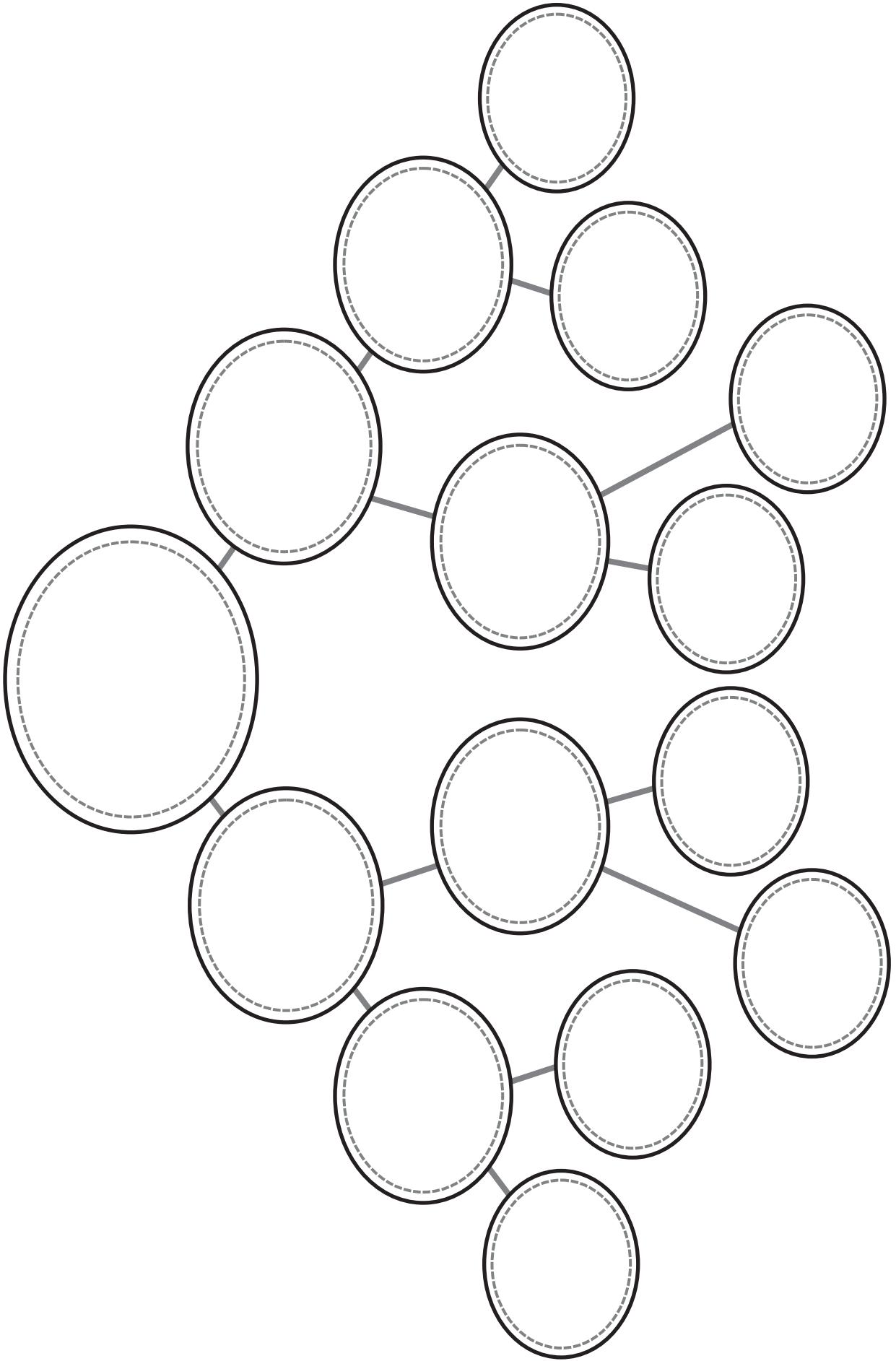
# Storyboard


# Timeline

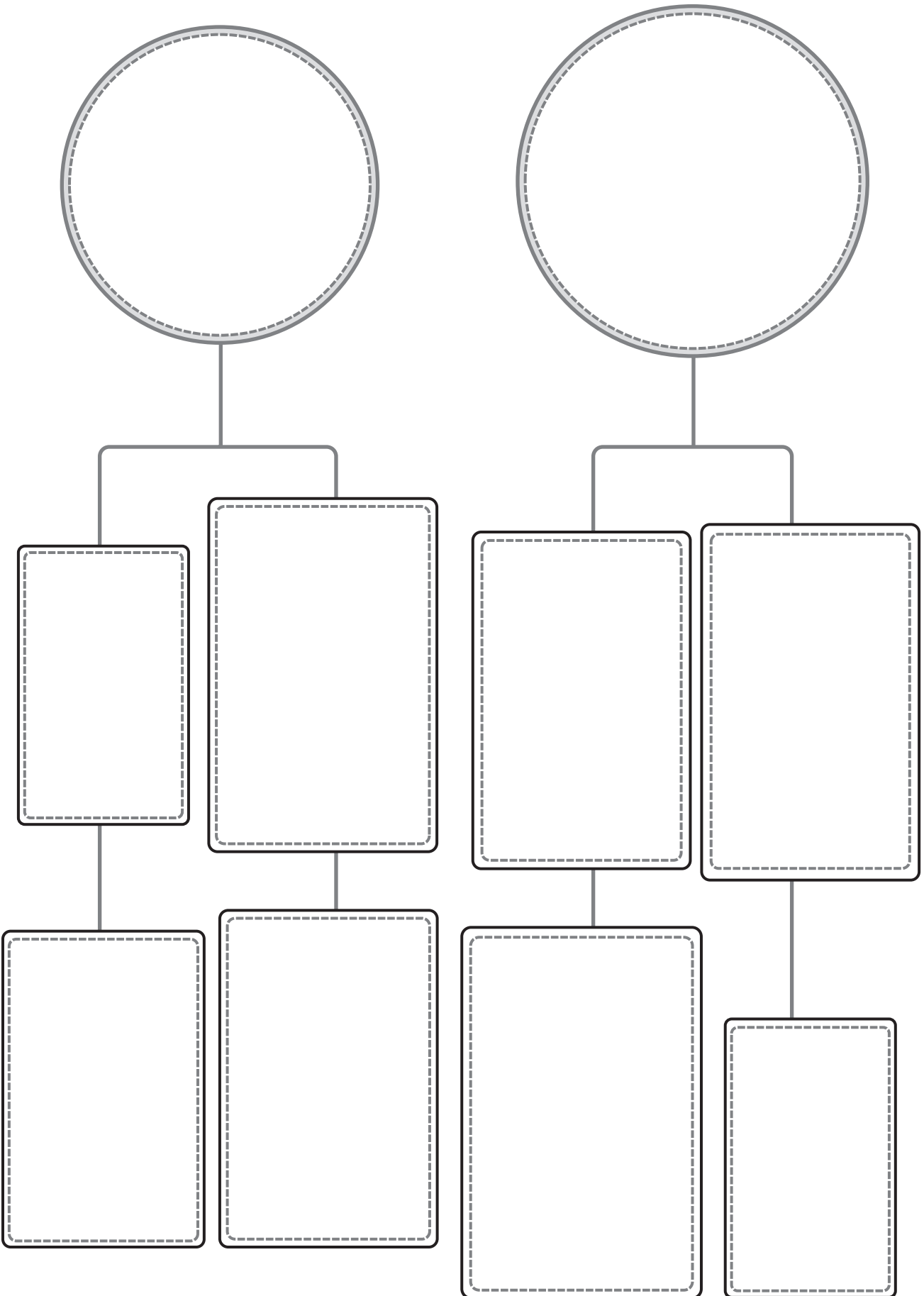


# Triple T-Chart

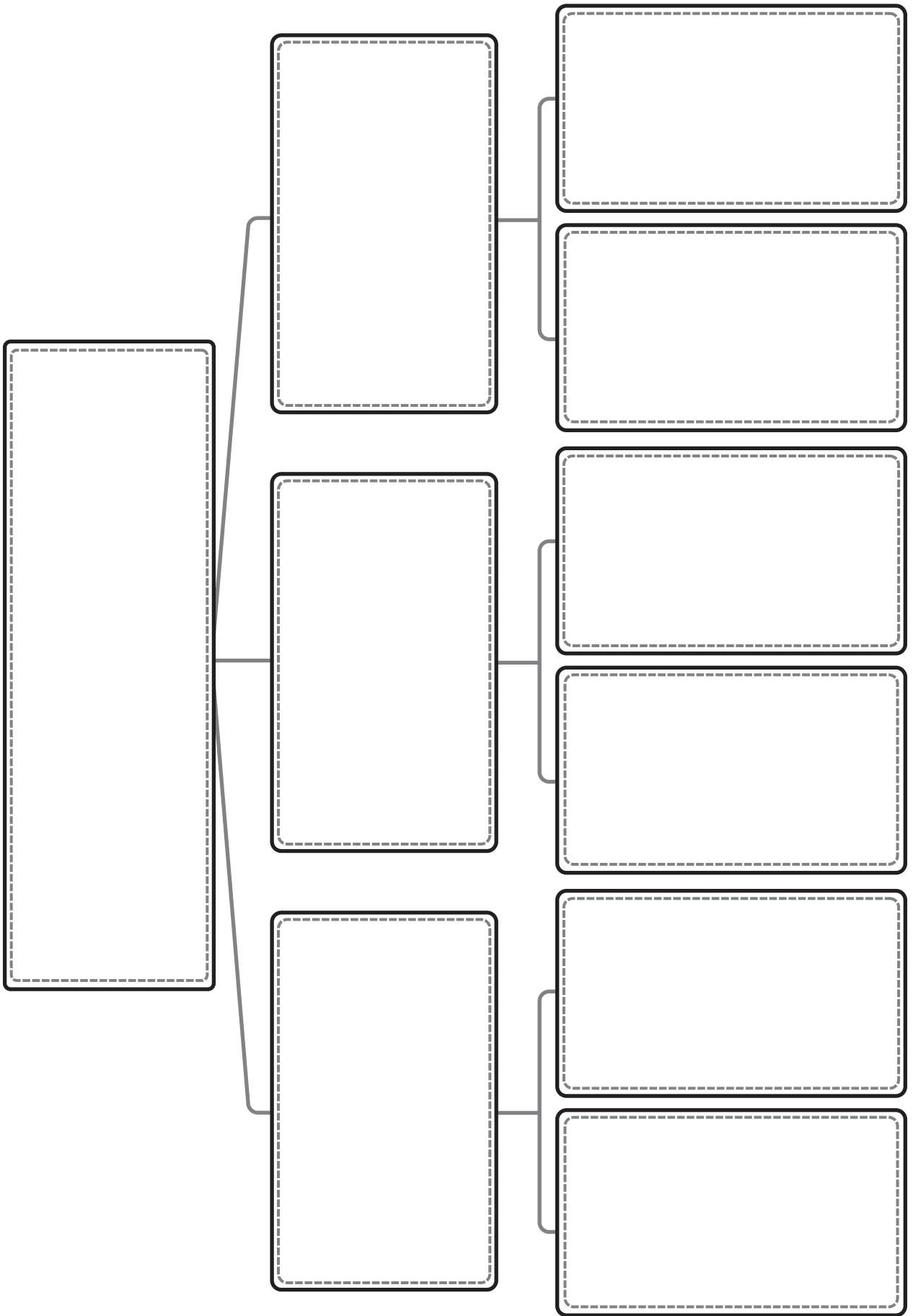
# Mind Map



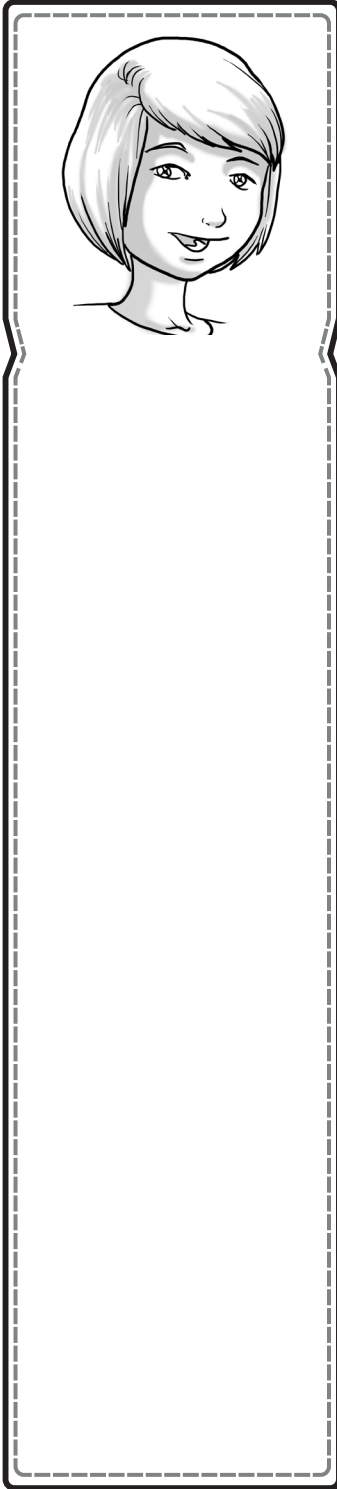
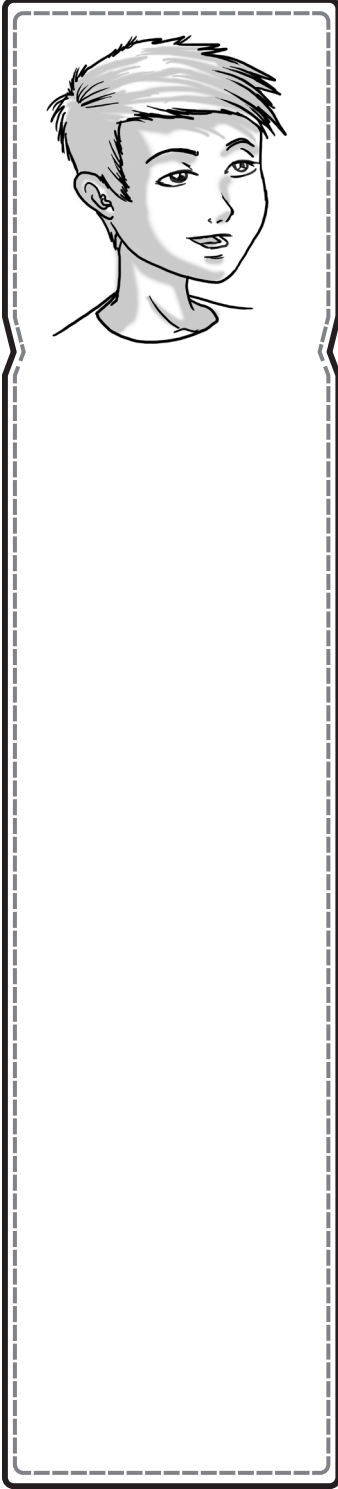




# Persuasion Map



# Bookmark Template



# Trading Card Template

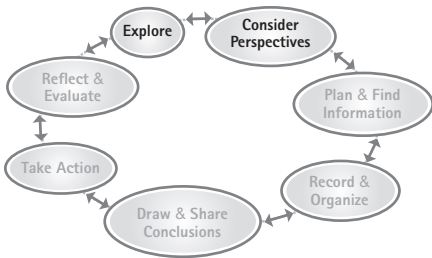
A trading card template consisting of a rounded rectangle. At the top left is a small square box. To its right is a long horizontal rectangular box. Below these two boxes is a large area enclosed by a dashed line, intended for a drawing or image.

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# Project Planning Templates



## Plan It

- What do we already know?
- What do we think about this issue?
- What do we need to understand about this issue?
- How does this issue or question affect us?
- What interests us about this issue or question?
- Why is this important?
- What questions do we have?
- Who is affected and why?
- What different opinions exist?

Ideas turn into action when you plan the steps you need to take. Start planning by thinking about the purpose and goals of your class action project.

**What would you like to see changed? Describe the purpose of your project.**

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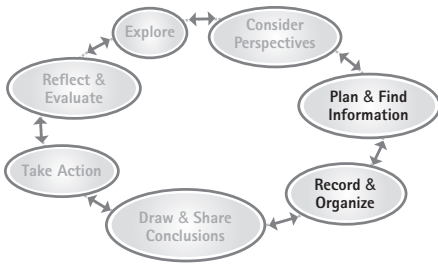


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**What are the project goals? Write them down. Make the goals focused and specific by describing actions.**

For example, if your project involves helping make your neighbourhood safer or cleaner, identify a specific goal like organizing monthly safety meetings for parents and students, or holding a neighbourhood cleanup day twice a year. If your project involves making your school more aware of the problem of poverty or bullying, identify specific goals like holding a rally or starting a monthly newsletter.





## Get Informed

How will we find out what we need to know and understand?

What type of information do we need?

What sources do we need to consult?

What is the best way to research?

Who can we find out more from?

How will we record our research?

What similarities and differences do we see?

What comparisons can we make?

What connections do we see?

What information do you need to support the project? Consider different types of sources you can consult to answer questions and develop knowledge and expertise about your issue.

### Review Learning

What have you already learned about your class action project? What information is important and relevant to the project?

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### Where can you find information?

**Print sources:** Go to your school or local library. Books, magazines and newspapers can provide research information.

**Internet sources:** Make a list of websites of interesting organizations, government sites, online newspapers and magazines. Check the search terms you will use with your teacher. When you find information, check the accuracy of the information you find on the Internet with your teacher or another adult.

**People sources:** Talk to friends and family members. Identify individuals who have expertise and organizations that can provide information.

**List other sources.**

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### Ask Questions

What more can you learn about the issues that relate to your project? Develop questions to which you need answers. For example:

- What makes this issue unique and important?
- Who is most affected? Why?
- Does this issue have local, national, or global effects? What are they?
- Who is already involved? (Consider individuals or groups such as government, businesses, non-profit organizations, etc.)
- What different strategies have others used to try to deal with the issue?

List other questions you may have:

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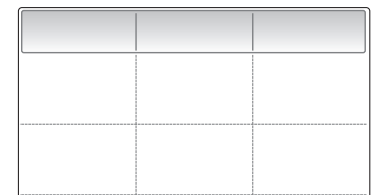
## Organize Research

Make a plan to find information. Identify the responsibilities and tasks of each group member by using this chart.

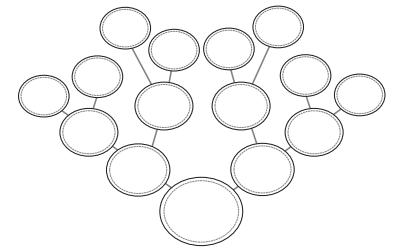
Group Member	Responsibilities (Area or Topic)	Tasks and Specific Jobs	Target Date

Use graphic organizers to help you organize your research. Decide what type of graphic organizer works best for collecting the information you need. Ask your teacher to provide you with the organizers you need.

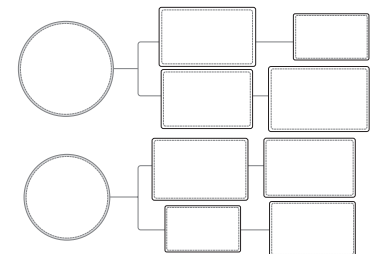
### Triple T-Chart

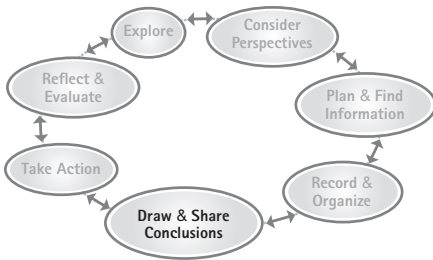


### Mind Map



### Flow Chart





How will we share our information?  
 What would happen if...?  
 What conclusions can we make?  
 What evidence supports our conclusions?

Communicating effectively involves identifying the people you know and what they can offer or help you with.

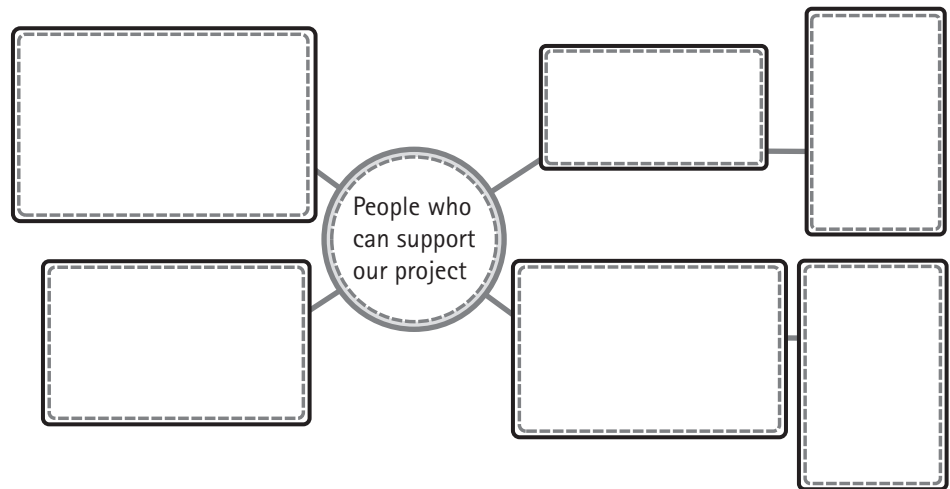
- Use a mind map to start identifying people you think can support your project. Ask your teacher for this graphic organizer.
- Describe what they can do in the second layer of the map.
- Identify other people who could contribute to your project.



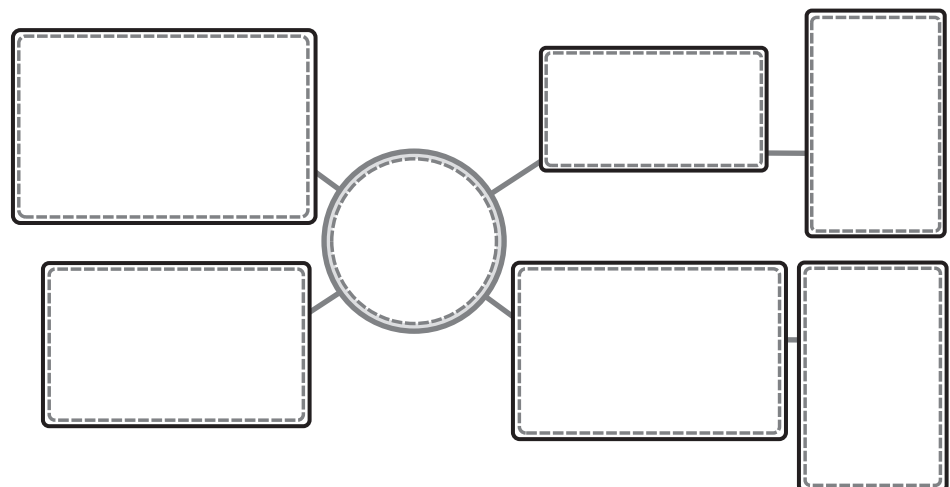
## Communicate and Implement

Effective communication is important to the success of your project. Effective communication involves:

- Communicating with others to ask questions and find information
- Asking for help from experts
- Telling others about your project
- Getting support for your project.



What progress have you made? Summarize the actions you have taken so far in the flow chart below. What are the next steps?



What conclusions can you make from your class action project? Use the chart below to analyze what you have accomplished and learned.

What is most important to know about our class action project?	What have we learned that we did not know before? What conclusions can we make?	What evidence supports our conclusions?	What are some solutions that address the issue or challenge of our class action project? What would happen if we implemented these solutions?

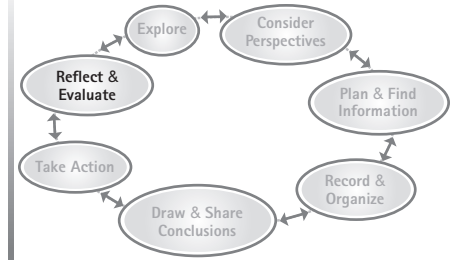
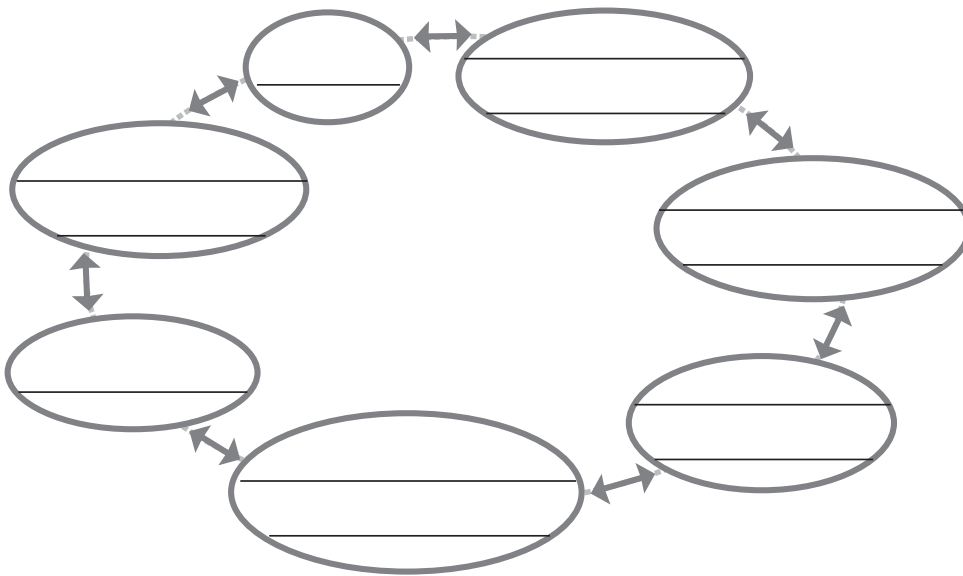


## Assess the Impact

How can you assess, or judge, the impact of your activities?

- Keep your assessment simple. Evaluate how successful you think your activities were. What were the results? Describe them.
- Ask for the input of others. What did they think? How were they affected?
- Look for unexpected results from your activities. What were they and who did they affect?
- What else could you do? What other ideas resulted from your activities?

Use the inquiry circle to assess the process you have used to implement your project.



How effective were our actions?

What should we change?

What should we do next?

What do we need to find out about?

### How can you tell if you are successful? Consider:

- The people who have participated
- Who and how many you have affected
- Satisfaction from team members
- Other projects that get ideas from your work
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We hope this resource is helpful in supporting your Social Studies program. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about this resource.

Please return this page to:

**Elections Alberta**  
Suite 100, 11510 Kingsway NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T5G 2Y5

Office Hours:  
Monday through Friday

8:15 a.m. to 12 noon;  
1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tel: 780-427-7191  
Fax: 780-422-2900

Other locations in the province can call toll free by dialing 310-0000 then dial 780-427-7191

This feedback form can also be completed online on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca), under the *Education* tab.

## *Building Future Voters*

### ■ **Teacher's Feedback Form**

1. This resource provides effective and practical strategies to support student learning about citizenship, democracy and the electoral process.

strongly agree     agree     disagree     strongly disagree

COMMENTS

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2. This resource is well organized, and easy to read and use.

strongly agree     agree     disagree     strongly disagree

COMMENTS

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3. The activities and strategies in this resource were effective in helping me prepare to work with students at the Grades 6, 9 or 12 levels (circle one).

strongly agree     agree     disagree     strongly disagree

COMMENTS

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4. We welcome your comments and suggestions for future editions of this resource.

COMMENTS

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## Building Future Voters

### ■ Permission Form



Elections Alberta has developed educational resources, called *Building Future Voters*, for teaching about citizenship, democracy and the electoral process for Grades 6, 9 and 12 Social Studies classrooms. Some activities that your child completes may involve working directly with a Returning Officer of an Alberta electoral division.

Elections Alberta would like to share examples of student ideas, responses and work on their website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca). They are asking for your permission in two areas:

#### One: To share your child's work with Elections Alberta

I/we are aware that by giving this consent, I/we are permitting Elections Alberta and Returning Officers who may visit the classroom, to view samples of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of child)'s work.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### Two: To display a sample of your child's work on the Elections Alberta website

NOTE: These samples will include your child's first name and community only.

I/we are aware that by giving this consent, I/we are permitting Elections Alberta to display samples of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of child)'s work on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca), and that if consent were withheld, this posting would not occur.

I \_\_\_\_\_ give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_'s work (if selected) to be displayed on the Elections Alberta website.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you have any questions or concerns, Elections Alberta can be contacted using the information below:

#### Elections Alberta

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***Building Future Voters***

**■ Teaching Ideas & Student Work Submission Form**

The teaching and learning process can always be improved. We welcome your ideas and suggestions for enhancing, adapting to adding to the activities, information and materials in this resource.

Please submit your ideas on this form and attach any photographs or photocopies you may have of student work. Ensure that you also attach the **Permission Form** provided on page 155 of this resource with any student work that you send to us.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description of idea or suggestion (Attach extra pages if required):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Attached:**

Student work (Describe and identify students by first name, grade level and community. Attach list if necessary.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Permission Form(s)





