



Global Voices Information Sheet

Children's Issues and the Canadian Election



The UNCRC

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights—for children.
- The United Nations adopted the convention on November 20, 1989. Since then, 193 countries have ratified it including every U.N. member nation except the United States and Somalia. This makes the UNCRC the most widely ratified document in history.
- Rights in the UNCRC are divided into three categories: provision, protection and participation.
- Provision rights recognize the rights of children to provision of assistance for their basic needs.
- Protection rights were established to keep children safe from all forms of exploitation and cruelty, arbitrary separation from family and abuses in the criminal justice system.
- Participation rights include the child's freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting his or her life.

Child Ombudsperson

- A child ombudsperson is a person who acts as an independent defender of children's rights. They deal with complaints from the public about injustice by government agencies.
- The main responsibilities of an ombudsperson are to improve the performance of the government, improve their accountability to the public and to make sure people have access to their administration.
- The first Child Ombudsperson was established in Norway in 1981. Since then, their job has been to promote and protect the rights and interests of children in society.
- This is particularly important because children are a particularly vulnerable group. They have no political power and no vote. So, an ombudsperson seeks to ensure their voice is heard.

Key Terms

- **advocate** – to speak or write in favour of
- **eradicate** – to remove or destroy completely
- **expenditure** – something that is paid out
- **platform** – a public statement of the principles, objectives, and policy of a political party

Global Voices Elementary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Themes and Course Connections:

- Themes: children's rights, child ombudsmen, parliament, representation, election, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Course Connections: The Arts, Language, and Social Studies.

Materials:

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Global Voices column

Specific Expectations and Learning Goals:

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express, and defend a position on an issue and explain how to put the ideas into action.

Knowledge and Understanding:

1. Children's Rights Jigsaw (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Divide the class into small, equal groups.
 - b. In their groups, ask students to discuss children's rights. They must discuss what they know about these rights and list the different rights that children have and the way these rights are upheld.
 - c. When groups have finished their discussions, ask group members to number themselves off.
 - d. Create new groups by joining the matching numbers together.
 - e. In their new groups, ask students to share what was talked about in their initial groups. Encourage students to discuss the topic of children's rights further.
 - f. When groups have completed their discussions hold a class discussion and compile student's thoughts on the board.

Thinking:

1. Guided Reading: The Global Voices Column (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Have students sit in a circle and distribute one copy of the Global Voices column to each student.
 - b. Pre-reading steps:
 - i. Make predictions: ask students to read the title of the column and view the pictures. After doing so, ask them to make predictions as to what the column is going to be about.
 - ii. Introduce vocabulary: federal, election, politicians, policies, welfare, investment, advocate, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, parliament, eradicate, and child ombudsmen,
 - iii. Assess prior knowledge: ask students to discuss what they already know about these topics.
 - c. Reading steps:
 - i. Go around the circle and have each student read a section of the column to the class, giving each student a turn to read.
 - ii. As students are reading, offer guidance and coaching by providing prompts, asking questions, and encouraging attempts at reading strategy application.
 - d. Post reading steps:
 - i. Encourage students to provide a summary of the column in order to ensure they have understood the series of events.
 - ii. Ask questions about the text to judge comprehension.

2. Media Literacy (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. Divide the class into small groups and distribute chart paper to each group.
 - b. On the chart paper, ask each group to write the heading of the column in the center of the page.
 - c. Ask each group to write all the words that come to mind after reading the column around the center title, creating a word web.
 - d. When students have completed their word webs, ask them to answer the following questions in their groups:
 - i. What is the message of this column?
 - ii. Who created this message?
 - iii. What creative techniques are used to attract the reader's attention?
 - iv. How might other people understand this message differently than me?
 - v. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in this column? Which ones are left out?
 - vi. What statistics or facts are listed in the column?
 - vii. Why has this message been created?
 - viii. Do you agree with this message?
 - ix. What do you know? What are you unsure of? What would you like to know?
 - e. As a class, discuss the students' word webs as well as their answers to the above questions. Discuss why it is important to understand the source and potential bias of a resource offering news information.

Communication:

1. Child Ombudsmen Debate (estimated time: 30 minutes)
 - a. Using the knowledge gained from reading the Global Voices column, ask students to explain the job of an ombudsman, particularly a child ombudsmen.
 - b. Following this discussion, explain to students that an ombudsman is a person who acts as a trusted intermediary between an organization and a constituency while representing the constituent's interests. A child ombudsmen would represent children under the age of 18 and act in their best interest in parliament.

- c. Ask students to explain why the creation of this position is important for Canada and for children.
- d. Thinking back to the Global Voices column, ask students to explain the different things child ombudsmen have done in other parts of the world.
- e. In a written reflection, ask students to write why they think it is important for Canada to elect a child ombudsman and what this position would mean for Canadian children.

Application:

1. Children's Issues (estimated time: 45 minutes)
 - a. Tell students to think about the possibility of a child ombudsman being elected in Canada.
 - b. Ask students to volunteer children's rights issues that they would like the child ombudsman to address here in Canada. List suggestions on the board.
 - c. Ask students to explain what each of these issues look like in Canada and why they are important.
 - d. Following this discussion, encourage students to select one of the children's rights issues listed on the board and create a poster that would catch the attention of Canadian parliament, advocating for this issue and the need for a Child Ombudsman.
 - e. Display completed posters around the classroom.

Additional Resources:

In addition to the above lesson plans, you may want to share some additional resources with your students. Listed below are some links to useful online resources:

Free The Children – www.freethechildren.com

Children's rights lesson plan -

<http://www.freethechildren.com/getinvolved/educator/docs/Childrens%20Rights%20-%20Elementary%20lesson%20plan.pdf>