



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 Secondary 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: Canadian and World Studies, English, and Social Sciences and Humanities.

Materials:

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Computers and internet
- 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 (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. Explain to students that "low-income children are more likely to have low birth rates, suffer from type two diabetes, and live with a disability." Further, "child poverty negatively impacts the justice system, education system, and the economy."
 - b. Divide students into pairs and ask them to reflect on these facts and discuss how these are children's rights issues.
 - c. When pairs have finished discussing, bring the class back together and hold a discussion around children's rights.

- d. Have students brainstorm and identify the rights of children and write a list on the chalk board.
- e. Explain to students that this weeks' Global Voices column focuses on the topic of children's rights.

Thinking:

1. Reading Comprehension: Global Voices Column (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. Pre reading steps:
 - i. Introduce the topic and encourage students to discuss what they already know about the topic, making predictions around what the column is about.
 - b. Reading steps:
 - i. Read: students must read the text independently, highlighting important points throughout the column.
 - ii. Ask: students must ask themselves what the story is about, recording five questions they are unsure of after reading the column.
 - iii. Paraphrase: encourage students to write point form notes in their own words around what the column is about.
 - c. Post reading discussion:
 - i. What are the main points of the column?
 - ii. What emotions did this column evoke in you?
 - iii. What problem is identified in the column?
 - iv. What questions do you have about the column?
2. Media Literacy (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. Ask students to practice their media literacy skills by working independently to identify the following:
 - i. Title: include the full title of the article (also called the headline).
 - ii. Author: give the author's full name.
 - iii. Newspaper: the full name of the newspaper from which the column is taken.
 - iv. Date: the day the column appeared in the newspaper.
 - v. Subject: the overall topic that the column is describing.
 - vi. Event: what event led to the writing of the column?
 - vii. Main Idea: identify what the author is proving or arguing. Is the author trying to convince readers to take a side? If so, what option is the author encouraging?
 - viii. Evidence: list several facts/arguments that support the main idea and help to convince the reader or inform them of the issue. Does the author provide enough factual material to support his/her ideas?
 - ix. Significance: explain why this issues is important and whom it may affect.
 - x. Point of View: is the article, in your opinion, balanced or biased? Are different viewpoints presented? Whose viewpoints are left out?
 - b. When this is complete, bring the class back together and discuss student answers.

Communication:

1. The Child Ombudsman: Reflection (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Using the knowledge gained from reading the Global Voices column, ask students to explain the job of an ombudsman, particularly a child ombudsman.
 - 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 ombudsman would represent children under the age of 18 and act in their best interest in parliament.

- c. Ask students to reflect back on the Global Voices column and list the ways child ombudsmen have taken up children's issues in other places in the world.
- d. Instruct students to choose one of these actions that have been taken and write a reflection around how this is important.
- e. When students have completed their reflection, ask them to share their thoughts with a partner and discuss these issues together.

Application:

1. Children's Rights Issues in Canada (estimated time: 1 hour)
 - 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 work independently to determine how they can raise awareness on this issue and draw attention to Canada's need for an elected Child Ombudsman. Ask students to create a proposal listing the actions they would take.
 - e. When proposals are complete, ask students to submit their work for grading.

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/Children's%20Rights%20-%20Secondary%20lesson%20plan.pdf>