

# Lesson: How civically engaged are you?

## Big idea

Becoming an active citizen can mean different things to different people. It is important to figure out how you can help to strengthen democracy not only in your community but also in your country and around the world. This may mean keeping up with the news and discussing current events with family and friends in an informed manner or volunteering for a political campaign or even engaging in political activism like a boycott. Learning how to treat others as political equals, seeking out ways to participate in decision making and respecting the rights and freedoms of others are important skills and experiences for all citizens. Everyone has a role to play in maintaining a civil society that upholds the principles of democracy.

## Curriculum connections

**C1.** Civic Contributions, Inclusion, and Service: analyse the importance of various contributions to the common good, and assess the recognition of diverse beliefs, values, and perspectives, in communities in Canada

**C1.2** explain how various actions can contribute to the common good at the local, national, and/or global level

**C1.5** explain various ways in which people can access information about civic matters, highlighting the importance of applying related digital literacy and critical-thinking

skills, and assess the effectiveness of ways in which individuals can voice their opinions and influence others' opinions on these matters, including through social media

**C2.** Engaged Citizenship and Creating Change: analyse a civic issue of personal interest, and propose and assess methods of creating positive change in their community

**C2.1** analyse a civic issue of personal interest, including how it is viewed by different groups

**C2.2** propose different courses of action to address a specific civic issue in order to create positive change in their communities, and assess the merits and effectiveness of each

## Learning goals

I am learning to:

- identify social issues and the civic actions that are used to address them
- participate in a small group discussion
- analyse how the internet has affected how social issues are addressed
- identify a social issue of personal concern and propose/carry out a course of action to address it

## Success criteria

I can:

- explain how civic action can be used to address social issues and create positive change
- assess the effectiveness of ways that people can use the internet, including social media, to voice their opinions and influence others to create positive change
- self-assess my level of civic engagement and continue to try and create positive change in my community

## Inquiry question

How civically engaged are you?

## Required materials

1. Appendix A Student handout - [How civically engaged are you?](#)
2. Appendix B Group handout - [Online civic action placemats](#)
3. Appendix C Group handout - [Online civic action - Strengths and weaknesses](#)
4. Appendix D Student handout - [Civic engagement log](#)
5. Appendix E Student handout - [Assessment - Exit card](#)
6. Appendix F Student handout - [Assessment rubric](#)

## Minds on

### Before the lesson

1. A couple of days before teaching this lesson, ask students to begin thinking about a civic issue and an action that was taken or is being taken to address the issue and create positive change. This can be an action that the student did themselves about an issue of personal interest or an example taken from the past or present by someone else.
2. Students should select a primary or secondary source about the civic action to bring to class and explain. This can be an image, an advertisement, a public campaign slogan/poster, text from a speech, social media post, news article, etc.
3. When students come to class for this lesson, they must bring this source with them and be able to speak about the issue and the action using some or all of the following prompts:
  - a. What is the civic issue involved and what is my position on this issue?
  - b. What groups are involved in this issue? Are their views similar or different?
  - c. Why should others care about this civic issue?
  - d. What action was taken to address the issue? How does this action contribute to the common good?
  - e. Is the action creating positive change? How?
  - f. What role can I play in addressing this civic issue?

## At the beginning of the lesson:

1. Review the question prompts for student discussion. Students should have their source to show and explain to others (it can be on paper or on a device as long as others can see it).
2. Divide students into groups of 3 and label each student within the group as A, B or C.
3. Students will use the Microlab discussion protocol to explain and discuss the sources they selected that represent civic issues and actions.
4. Explain the steps to the class after the groups of 3 have assembled and been labeled.
  - a. The first minute is for each student to think about how they will explain their source, and which prompts they will be using from the suggested list above. This can be displayed in a visible spot, or a copy can be distributed for all small group members to reference.
  - b. Beginning with a designated letter, (e.g. Student B), give 30-45 seconds for each student to explain their selection. Allow all 3 students the same amount of time (the other students must practice listening and not commenting while each speaks).
  - c. After each student has offered their explanation, proceed to the 2nd round where each has 30-45 seconds to ask questions and make comments on the issues and actions.
5. Conclude with a whole group discussion of what stands out to students regarding the issues selected and the actions to address them. As a class, create an initial criteria list of what makes a civic action effective to address social issues. Keep this list visible for the rest of the lesson.

## Activity

1. Distribute a copy of the handout, **How civically engaged are you?** (Appendix A) to each student and provide some time for them to complete it and tally their results. This is a good way for students to broaden their understanding of what civic engagement means and to make some personal connections.
2. Explain to students that young people are often thought of as apathetic and not engaged and for living too much of their lives online. The next part of the lesson will invite students to consider whether online activism is an effective way to bring about social change.
3. Write or project the following statement in a visible location for all students to see: “The internet is a powerful tool for social justice and civic action”.

4. Organize students into small groups and provide them with the **Placemat template** (Appendix B) included with this lesson or an online tool for brainstorming (e.g. Padlet, Jamboard). Each group member writes ideas in a space around the centre of the placemat or online board. Afterwards, the group compares what each member has written, and common items are compiled in the centre of the paper/online board.

**Teacher note:** The **template** (Appendix B) includes an option for groups of three or four students.

5. Next, have students post their placemats around the classroom or in a digital space for others to view. Remind students of the criteria they created after the Minds On.
6. Distribute a copy of the handout, **Online civic action - Strengths and weaknesses** (Appendix C) and have students complete PART A, writing down as many strengths and weaknesses of the internet being used for social justice and civic action. They can conduct some online research to help them generate some ideas.
7. Invite students to share their ideas by writing down their best arguments on sticky notes, the black/white board in class or using a digital tool.
8. Revisit the class list of criteria for effective civic action and add/revise as needed to reflect student learning.

9. Now that the class has a list of criteria for an effective civic action and have considered the strengths and weaknesses of the internet as a means of social activism, ask students to return to their small groups and use their learning to find examples of a civic action that was effectively carried out using the internet. They may find a Twitter campaign, Tik Tok videos, Instagram posts, YouTube videos, etc. They will present their findings to the class briefly and explain how the civic action fits the class criteria for being effective. Students may use part B of the **handout** (Appendix C) to guide them.

**Teacher note:** The teacher may wish to provide an example and analyse it with students against the class criteria.

Some examples are:

- In 2014, 276 schoolgirls were abducted by Boko Haram in the northern Nigerian village of Chibok. The global social media community rallied around a call to #bringbackourgirls. In less than three weeks the hashtag had been used over 1 million times.
- The #MeToo movement brought awareness to sexual violence in the workplace by encouraging millions of survivors to share their experiences on social media and worked to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. In Canada, #MeToo and its French equivalent, #MoiAussi, have amplified the voices of victims and changed the conversation pertaining to rape, sexual abuse, sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence, harassment and misconduct.

- Within days of the 14 February 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, surviving students insisted the time for action against gun violence was immediate. They adopted the rallying cry #NeverAgain and started a movement. They raised funds on GoFundMe in three days as well as through private donations from Hollywood personalities and organized walkouts and a Washington rally.
- #IdleNoMore started in November 2012, among Treaty People in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta protesting the Canadian government’s dismantling of environmental protection laws, endangering First Nations who live on the land. Its female founders used social media and new technologies to connect the most remote reserves to each other, to urbanized Indigenous people, and to the non-Indigenous population.

## Consolidation

### Option 1

Students can keep a [log of their civic actions](#) (Appendix D) for an agreed upon time. If this lesson is completed near or at the beginning of the course, consider having students log their civic actions for the entire course and reflect on whether they became more engaged. If this lesson is completed at the beginning of a unit, students can log their civic actions for the duration of the unit. A template for a student log is available with this lesson.

### Option 2

If the school or classroom has a designated bulletin board or display place for your department or course, students can be assigned a particular week to create a campaign for social justice to address a social issue. Keeping in mind the criteria for effective civic action, this can involve creating a visual display, an informational video, a petition, placards, etc. This can also be done with a designated bulletin board or display case within the classroom. Students can then decide to incorporate the use of social media to continue this civic action.

### Option 3

#### [Exit card - How civically engaged are you?](#)

(Appendix E) - Reflecting on your survey results and learning in this lesson, are you satisfied with your level of civic engagement? Why or why not?

- Include the ways you already engage in civic action in your response and, if applicable, ways you could become more engaged

## Assessment

Options 1 and 2 above can be assessed using the [rubric](#) (Appendix F) included in this lesson.

The teacher can provide written feedback for Option 3.