

DEMOCRACY IN A BOX KIT

ACTIVITY BOOKLET

Secondary & Continuing Education Level



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Elections BC's Democracy in a Box Kit. It includes activities and resources to help you explore democracy - past and present - in British Columbia. This booklet provides many ideas for democracy-themed activities for your group, but we encourage you to use your imagination and think of new ways to use the materials in the kit. Above all, have fun!

What does “democracy” mean anyway? The word comes from the Greek words “demos” (people) and “kratos” (rule) so it means “the rule of the people”. Democracy is a system of government where the people have a say in how things are run, and they share their opinion by voting. British Columbia is a “parliamentary democracy”, which means we elect representatives to form a government and make decisions on our behalf. These elected representatives are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

Elections BC, who designed this kit, runs provincial elections and other events, like referenda (a vote on a matter of public interest or concern). We are an independent Office of the Legislature. We are “non-partisan”, meaning we treat all voters, candidates and political parties equally and fairly. For more information about Elections BC and our role, visit our website: elections.bc.ca.

Connections to Big Ideas in Social Studies:

Social Studies 11: Explorations in Social Studies & Political Studies 12 - Understanding how political decisions are made is critical to being an informed and engaged citizen

Political Studies 12 - Decision making in a democratic system of government is influenced by the distribution of political and social power

Connections to Curricular Competencies in Social Studies:

All Grades - Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Grade 9-10 - Assess how prevailing conditions and the actions of individuals or groups affect events, decisions, or developments

Political Studies 12 - Assess how underlying conditions and the actions of individuals or groups affect events, decisions, and developments, and analyze multiple consequences



Instructions:

- 1. Discuss Decision-Making Models:** Explain to participants that groups make decisions and create rules in different ways. Provide these examples:
 - a. Autocratic** – One person decides for the group.
 - b. Consensus** – Group members discuss the options and everyone must come to an agreement to support a decision in the best interests of the entire group.
 - c. Democratic** – All group members have a say or vote and the final decision is determined by what is most popular.

Brainstorm with your group to think of an example of when people use each of these models. The examples could apply to their classroom, home, or community. Explain that in British Columbia, we use the democratic model to choose our provincial government. All eligible citizens have the chance to voice their opinion by voting for the candidate that they want to represent them in the Legislative Assembly.

- 2. Prepare Materials:** Photocopy the resources in the Resource Booklet that are listed in the Materials in the Resource Booklet section.
- 3. Choose a Topic for the Mock Election:** First, decide the purpose of your election. You can vote to elect someone in your group. The winner might be elected to do a certain task (e.g. give a speech at an upcoming event) or to receive an award. You can also use the mock election to help your group make a decision. For example:
 - a.** Where should we go for our vacation?
 - b.** What restaurant should we eat at?



- c. What book should we read?
- d. What activity should we do together next week?
- e. What day should we have our party?

4. **Review the Voting Process:** If you have access to the internet, watch the two-minute videos on the Elections BC website called *What to Expect When You Vote* and *Parliamentary Democracy in British Columbia* (elections.bc.ca/videos). If your group has any questions about the voting process or you want more information, check out these resources:

- a. Glossary on page 3 of the Resource Booklet
- b. Steps of the Provincial Election Process on page 7 of the Resource Booklet
- c. Elections BC website: elections.bc.ca

5. **Voter Registration:** Participants who want to vote can add their name to the Voters List, or the facilitator can add their names. The Voters List will be used by your group's election officials on voting day.

If anyone is eligible to register to vote in real life (i.e. they are 18 years or older, a Canadian citizen and a B.C. resident for the past six months), you can remind them to register on the Provincial Voters List. If the individual has registered already but they have changed their name or address, they should update their voter registration.

If anyone in your group is 16 or 17 years old, a Canadian citizen and a B.C. resident, they can pre-register to vote by joining Elections BC's List of Future Voters. Individuals on the List of Future Voters will be automatically added to the Provincial Voters List when they turn 18.

To pre-register, register or update, they can visit Elections BC's website (elections.bc.ca/OVR) or call Elections BC at 1-800-661-8683. They will need to supply one of the following:

- their B.C. driver's licence number,
- their B.C. Identification Card number,
- the last six digits of their Social Insurance Number, or
- the last six digits of their Personal Health Number.

People who are registered to vote will receive important information in the mail about when and where to vote when an election is called.

- 6. Nominations:** Determine who will run as candidates. The candidates can represent themselves using their own names or they can play the role of another person (e.g. singer, actor, sports player). The candidates should decide if they are a member of a political party or if they are running as an independent candidate. The candidates could also represent a topic or activity. For example, if your group is deciding where to go on vacation, each candidate could represent a different vacation destination. If



information with the public in newspapers, television, radio and online. The journalists in your group could:

- interview the candidates,
- host an all-candidates' debate or
- write articles about the candidates.

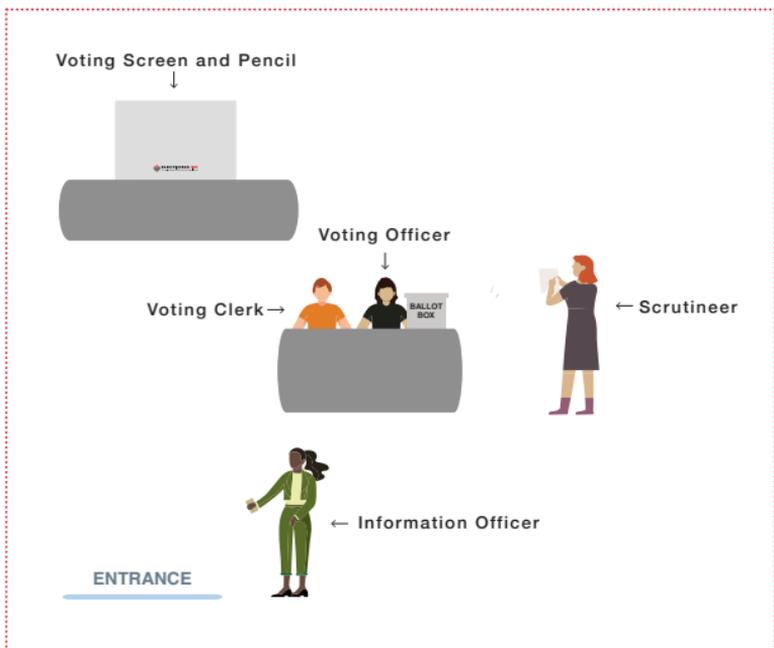
8. **Vote:** Now for the fun part! It is voting time.

- Choose the Election Officials and Scrutineer:** The election officials are people hired to run the election at the voting place. For your election, you will have a Voting Officer, Voting Clerk and Information Officer. You can also choose someone to be the Scrutineer, which is a person chosen to represent a candidate at the voting place. The Scrutineer watches the voting to make sure everyone follows the rules and watches the ballot counting to make sure it is consistent and fair. This also helps make sure the voting process is transparent, meaning it is open and honest. Review the roles with the group and hand out the Role Cards.
- Prepare the Ballots:** Write the candidates' names (and political parties if they identify one) on each ballot and photocopy the page of ballots so there is one ballot for each participant plus a few extras in case someone makes a mistake on their ballot.



- c. **Set Up the Voting Place:** Set up a table and chairs. The Voting Clerk and Voting Officer will sit here. Give the Voting Clerk the Voters List and a pen so the Voting Clerk can keep track of who has voted. Place the ballot box on the table. Set up another table behind the Voting Officer and Voting Clerk. Put the voting screen and a pencil on the table. This is where the voters will privately mark their ballot. Set up a chair for the Scrutineer a few metres away from the Voting Officer and Voting Clerk.

SAMPLE VOTING PLACE DIAGRAM



- d. **Remind the Group to be Non-Partisan:** Everyone inside the voting place must be non-partisan. This means they are neutral and do not favour a certain candidate or political party. People are not allowed to tell voters whom to choose on their ballot, or talk about who they are voting for while they are in the voting place. Candidates are not allowed to campaign inside the voting place.
- e. **Conduct the Vote:**
- i. Let the election officials and Scrutineer vote before opening the voting place to the rest of the group.
 - ii. After they have voted, they get into position and get ready to open the door for the other voters.
 - iii. The Information Officer stands by the door and opens the door when voting starts.
 - iv. The voters walk into the voting place and are greeted by the Information Officer.
 - v. The Information Officer directs them to the table where the Voting Clerk and Voting Officer are sitting. This is the voting station.
 - vi. The voters go to the table one by one. The Voting Clerk asks the voters to sign beside their name on the Voters List. The signature confirms that the voter is allowed to vote, they have not voted yet and they will not vote again in this election.
 - vii. The Voting Officer gives a ballot to the voter and tells them to go behind the voting screen and use the pencil provided to mark the ballot with a checkmark or an 'x'. If the voter marks the ballot improperly by mistake, they can exchange their ballot for a new one. The ballot with the mistake on it is



a “spoiled ballot”. The Voting Officer writes “spoiled” on the ballot and sets it aside with the rest of the spoiled ballots. The spoiled ballots will not be counted.

- viii. After marking the ballot, the voter folds the ballot and returns to the voting station. The voter puts the ballot in the ballot box.

Secrecy and Voting: In 1873, the secret ballot was introduced in British Columbia. Since then, voters have been marking their ballots in private (e.g. behind voting screens), where nobody can see who they chose.

9. **Count the Ballots:** After everyone has voted, the Voting Clerk and Voting Officer count the ballots. The Scrutineer watches the Voting Clerk and Voting Officer count the ballots. The Voting Clerk and Voting Officer follow these steps:
 - a. The Voting Officer unfolds the ballots one by one and calls out the name of the candidate that the voter chose on the ballot. On the Tally Sheet, the Voting Clerk marks the box (with an ‘x’ or a checkmark) under the name of the candidate who received the vote on each ballot.
 - b. The Voting Officer places the ballots cast for each candidate in separate piles. The Voting Officer checks if the number of votes that the Voting Clerk recorded on the Tally Sheet matches the number of ballots in each pile.
 - i. If any of the ballots in the ballot box are blank or it is not clear who the voter wanted to vote for (e.g. they marked the circles beside two or more candidates), the Voting Officer and Voting Clerk put these ballots in a separate pile. These ballots are called “rejected ballots” and they will not be counted.

- ii. The Voting Clerk and Voting Officer put the spoiled ballots (ballots that voters marked improperly by mistake and exchanged for a new ballot) in a separate pile. These ballots will not be counted either.
 - c. The Voting Clerk fills in the Statement of Votes with the names of the candidates and the number of votes each one received.
 - d. If the Scrutineer thinks the Voting Clerk and Voting Officer made a mistake counting the ballots (e.g. they did not add up the number of ballots correctly or they accepted a ballot that they should have rejected), the Scrutineer can tell them. The Voting Officer will consider the Scrutineer's concern and then make the final decision.
10. **Announce the Results:** Once the election officials have determined who the winner is (i.e. the candidate that received the most votes), the Voting Officer announces the results to the group.

For Large Groups: This activity is designed for up to 30 people. If you have a large group, you could choose multiple people to act as Voting Clerks, Voting Officers, Information Officers and Scrutineers. Another option is you could divide the group into two smaller groups. One group can fill the roles of the election officials and Scrutineer at the voting place, while the other group votes. Then the groups can switch roles.



Reflection Questions:

After your group has completed the activity, ask them to answer these questions by writing their answers on a piece of paper or discussing them with a partner:

1. Was voting easy or difficult? Why?
2. In the 2017 Provincial General Election, 61% of registered voters voted. Why do you think some people voted and others did not? Why do you think it's important to vote?
3. Groups make decisions and create rules in different ways. Voting is one way that a group can make decisions.
 - a. How does your family make decisions together? For example, how does your family choose what to eat for dinner or where to go on vacation?
 - b. What are some rules in your house that you are supposed to follow? How did your family choose these rules?



ACTIVITY 2: HISTORY OF VOTING RIGHTS

Overview of Activity: Explore how voting rights in British Columbia have changed over time and become more inclusive since the first provincial election in 1871. In the past, several groups of people were not allowed to vote in provincial elections. Now, all Canadian citizens who are at least 18 years old and have lived in British Columbia for the six months before election day are allowed to vote.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the activity, participants will understand the impact of past discriminatory legislation and be able to describe how voting has changed over time.

Estimated Time: 1 hour

MATERIALS IN THE KIT

- ✓ Historical Timeline

MATERIALS IN THE RESOURCE BOOKLET

- ✓ Historical Events Cards (page 16)

OTHER MATERIALS:

- ✓ Tape
- ✓ Scissors



Connections to Big Ideas in Social Studies:

Grade 10 - Historical and contemporary injustices challenge the narrative and identity of Canada as an inclusive, multicultural society

Social Studies 11: Explorations in Social Studies & Political Studies 12 - Understanding how political decisions are made is critical to being an informed and engaged citizen

Political Studies 12 - Political institutions and ideology shape both the exercise of power and the nature of political outcomes

Political Studies 12 - Decision making in a democratic system of government is influenced by the distribution of political and social power

Social Justice 12 - The causes of social injustice are complex and have lasting impacts on society

Law Studies 12 - A society's laws and legal framework affect many aspects of people's daily lives

Connections to Curricular Competencies in Social Studies:

Grade 9 -11, Political Studies 12, Social Justice 12 & Law Studies 12 - Make reasoned ethical judgments

Grade 10 - Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs

Grade 11 - Assess the significance of people, places, events, phenomena, ideas, or developments

Grade 11 - Compare and contrast continuities and changes, trends and patterns, or similarities and differences for different people, places, events, phenomena, ideas, or developments

Instructions:

1. Cut the sheet of Historical Events Cards into individual cards.
2. Tape the Historical Timeline to the wall or place it on a table.
3. If you have access to the internet, go to Elections BC's website to watch *History of Voting Rights in British Columbia*: [elections.bc.ca/videos](http://bc.ca/videos).
4. Read aloud the events that are written on the Historical Events Cards. Do not look at the dates written on the back of the cards yet. Work as a group to put the cards in chronological order. If the Historical Timeline is on the wall, tape the event cards to the timeline. If the timeline is on the table, place the cards on the timeline.
5. Next, look on the back of each card to find out if you are correct and to find more information about the event.
6. Rearrange the cards into the correct order, if necessary.

Reflection Questions:

After your group has completed the activity, ask them to answer these questions by writing their answers on a piece of paper or discussing them with a partner:

1. Do any of the facts surprise you? Why or why not?
2. How has voting changed over time?
3. Who is allowed to vote in provincial elections today?
4. What can be done to encourage people to vote in provincial elections?

Connections to Big Ideas in Social Studies:

Social Studies 11: Explorations in Social Studies & Political Studies 12 - Understanding how political decisions are made is critical to being an informed and engaged citizen

Social Studies 11: Explorations in Social Studies - Physical features and natural resources influence demographic patterns and population distribution

Human Geography 12 - A geographic region can encompass a variety of physical features and/or human interactions

Connections to Curricular Competencies in Social Studies:

All Grades - Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Human Geography 12 -

Use geographic inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze data and ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Human Geography 12 -

Assess the significance of places by identifying the physical and/or human features that characterize them



Instructions:

1. Display the Electoral Districts of British Columbia Wall Map by taping it on a wall or placing it on a table. You could also access the map on the Elections BC website (elections.bc.ca/maps) and project it on a whiteboard.
2. Ask group members to identify where they live by placing a token (e.g. sticker, button, paper clip) on the map.
3. Ask the group, "What electoral district are we in now?" and write the answer on a large piece of paper or a board for the group to see.
4. Ask the group to look at the tokens on the map. If anyone lives in a different electoral district than the one written on the board, ask the group to call out the names of the electoral districts. Write the names of the electoral districts on the paper or board.
5. Choose an electoral district to examine in more detail. You can choose an electoral district that you wrote on the paper or board, or you can choose a different one.
6. Review the features in the map legend. As a group, discuss if the electoral district has any of the features listed below. For each feature, ask the group to identify if it is a natural resource:
 - a. Cities
 - b. First Nations (Bonus question: What is the First Nation's traditional place name?)
 - c. Treaty Lands
 - d. Parks

ACTIVITY 4: TRIVIA GAME

Overview of Activity: Host a fun, interactive trivia game to test your group's knowledge of elections and democracy. This includes multiple choice, true or false and open-ended questions. Sample questions include, "What is a by-election?" and "True or False: Voters must prove their identity before they vote".

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the activity, participants can demonstrate a basic understanding of elections and the voting process.

Estimated Time: 1 hour

MATERIALS IN THE KIT

- ✓ Pen
- ✓ Trivia Cards

OTHER MATERIALS

- ✓ Board or paper to write on





Instructions:

1. Divide the participants into teams. If the group prefers, they can play individually.
2. Decide if the trivia game should end when a team reaches a specific number of points (e.g. 10 points) or if the game should end after a set time (e.g. 30 minutes).
3. Write the names of the teams on a board or piece of paper.
4. Choose a Trivia Card at random and pose the question to the group.
5. The first person to raise their hand can answer the question. If the person is correct, their team earns one point. If they are wrong, the other teams can raise their hand and try to answer the question. The first team to answer the question correctly earns the point.
6. The facilitator keeps track of the points on the paper or board.
7. The person or team who reaches the point goal or the one with the most points after the set time wins the game.

Reflection Questions:

After your group has completed the activity, ask them to answer these questions by writing their answers on a piece of paper or discussing them with a partner:

1. What fact surprised you the most? Why?
2. What is a fun trivia question that you would add to the trivia game?

approval
speech
liberty
election
direction
advocate
approval
liberty
election
direction
advocate
approval
liberty
election
direction
advocate

representation
expression
society
future
voting place
constitution
direction
voting booth
support
candidate
approval
representation
expression
society
future
voting place

support
age
representation
expression
society
future
voting place
electoral district
legislation
poll
rights
electoral district
legislation
poll
rights

initiative
leadership
democracy
laws
choice
power
voice
bill
scrutineer
legislation
initiative
leadership
democracy
clerk
choice

ballot
election officials
by-election
voters list
recount
society
voter registration
ballot
election officials
by-election
voters list
recount
society
voter registration

speech
democracy
bill
officials
vote
choice
refer
rights
challenge
assistance
speech
democracy
bill
officials

expression
MLA
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9
MLA
democracy
direction
general election
challenge
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9
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