

## *Disenfranchised – The Famous Five*

### **Informing Others about the Historical Plight of the Disenfranchised and Promoting Equality**

#### **Introduction**

Students need to understand how the democratic process has changed and developed over time since it began in Ancient Greece, and how it is a relatively new idea for women to have the right to vote or even own property. Who were the Famous Five? How did they identify the need for change in Canadian laws? How did the changes brought on by their actions affect individual rights in Canada? Who are the "disenfranchised" in our society and in our world? What actions could you take to help them? What if these laws had never been changed? Are there still countries with laws like that today?

#### **Project Explanation**

In this project, students will develop an appreciation of how a group of five women worked tirelessly to bring about the democratic ideals of equity and fairness. This project will also help them to understand how an individual or group can participate in and influence the decision making process in government. They will create posters that will be used to inform others about the history of the disenfranchised, as well as remind us why we must take our right to vote very seriously.

#### **Alberta Social Studies Curriculum Unit Connections**

##### **Grade Five - Canada: The Land, Histories and Stories**

5.3 Canada: Shaping an Identity

##### **Grade Six - Democracy: Action and Participation**

6.1 Citizens Participating in Decision Making

##### **Grade Seven - Canada: Origins, Histories and Movement of People**

7.2 Following Confederation: Canadian Expansions

#### **Materials and Resources Needed**

- *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* - Character Biographies and Online Artifacts  
<http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks>
- CBC Archives: Voting in Canada: How a Privilege Became a Right

- [http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-73-1450/politics\\_economy/voting\\_rights/](http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-73-1450/politics_economy/voting_rights/)
- Famous Five Student Zone  
<http://www.edukits.ca/famous/students.html>
- Famous Five Foundation – About the Famous Five  
[http://www.famous5.org/education\\_about.htm](http://www.famous5.org/education_about.htm)
- The Famous Five – Heroes for Today  
<http://www.abheritage.ca/famous5/>
- Historical Context of Women before the Famous Five  
<http://www.abheritage.ca/famous5/context/index.html>
- Images Canada  
<http://www.imagescanada.ca/>

## Procedures

Students will create a poster about how citizenship in a democracy has changed since it began in the ancient Greek city-states thousands of years ago. General topics for the posters might be about the struggle of the disenfranchised, how we can assist the disenfranchised now, or why everyone should make sure they use their right to vote in government elections.

Begin the project by explaining that **disenfranchised** means someone who is deprived of the rights of equal citizenship, and often refers to not having the right to vote. Ask the students “Was there equality among people in the early days of Alberta? What are some examples?” Explain that this project will begin by focusing on the how the role of women was different compared to men at the time. Create a chart with the headings “Roles of Women in Early Alberta” and “Roles of Women in Present Day Alberta.” Have students brainstorm the types of roles women have in each time, the types of jobs they could or could not work in, expectations put on them, activities they could do, or any other information that is relevant. Examples for early Alberta might include: Women could not vote in elections, married women did not share ownership of their houses or land with their husbands, women doing the same work as men were paid less, etc.

Now expand the discussion to examine the roles of men, women, and children today. What roles does each group have? Are there differences in how each is treated compared to the others? Does everyone have the right to vote in elections? What are the restrictions on voters? What does it feel like to be excluded from voting? What restrictions do you think there would be, if any, on voting? What groups were excluded from voting in Canada's past? Are there still people who are disenfranchised now? Convicts in prisons? Children? People in non-democratic countries? New immigrants to Canada? Does everyone in our society feel equal? Why do so many people in our society not use their vote in an election?

After exploring the issues in the above discussions, students will undertake a project to inform others of our history, how we can promote equality in our

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society, and why we should all use our right to vote. Students will use the *Mavericks: A History of Alberta* site, as well as the other web resources, books, and personal interviews to research about the Famous Five, how women were treated in the past, voting issues in Canadian history, and how to promote a more equal society. Possible specific ideas that students could research include:

## Poster Topic Ideas

The Famous Five (as a group or individually)  
Women in Early Alberta  
Equal Pay for Equal Work – Women’s Salaries  
Women Mavericks in Alberta  
Women and the Vote  
Minorities and the Vote  
Are there still places with racism or sexism?  
How can we stop discrimination?  
How can we promote equality?  
Should convicts have the right to vote?  
Democracy in Ancient Greece  
Democracy in Early Alberta  
Democracy in Present Day Alberta  
Do we have equality yet?  
Voter Apathy – Statistics  
Why should you use your right to vote?

Students will need to include a title or slogan, headings, their researched information, illustrations or printed photographs, bright colours, and neat lettering. The posters should be creative, catch people’s attention, and also be informative. Historical photographs could be found and printed off by students by using the *Mavericks: A History of Alberta* site or *ImagesCanada.ca*.

## Assessment and Evaluation

- Students and their teacher should develop their own rubric by identifying evaluation criteria for the project that will match their own learner outcomes. This allows students to understand the expectations for their work and to have input into the ongoing evaluation process.
- Individually or in small groups, students might evaluate the work of two or three other students in order to gain insight into how their peers approached the project.
- A project journal may be used for information gathering as well as for reflective writing as the process is taking place. Students can pose questions, vent frustrations, synthesize their work, examine their process, and even wonder about what they are missing or what is still needed for their project. This may be completed as a group or individually.

## Ideas to Enrich this Project

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- Have students research topics such as the actual percentage of votes cast in various provincial and federal elections and the percentage of women and men who vote. Ask students to think about why it is important not only to have the right to vote, but to vote. Have them create a poster, radio or television advertisement to promote the need for people to vote in elections.
- Students could examine and brainstorm other ways to deal with issues relating to discrimination, equality and human rights within their school.