

Are We All Equal Yet?

Using Personal Stories to Study the Moral and Ethical Issues of Prejudice in Canada

Introduction

Students need to recognize how individuals, groups and governments interact and bring about change, recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada, and recognize the influence of historical events and legislation on democratic decision-making in our country. How can we critically analyze different times in Canadian history where the rights of citizens were taken away or they were treated differently than others? How did people react to racism? Is prejudice still an issue?

Project Explanation

In this project, students will develop skills of critical and creative thinking as they analyze the perspectives of various visible minority people throughout Alberta History. Students will analyze the stories of how specific people dealt with racism or sexism, and develop a PMI chart (Positives, Minuses, Interesting) of what the person did. They will then participate in a critical group discussion about prejudice. Finally, they will write about their opinions and feelings on the issue in a format of their choice, and create a poster to inform others about how these historical figures fought against prejudice.

Materials and Resources Needed

- [Mavericks: An Incorrigible History of Alberta](#)
- Understanding Prejudice - Go to Teacher's Corner for Ideas
<http://www.understandingprejudice.org/>
- Teachers Against Prejudice
<http://www.teachersagainstoprejudice.org/>
- Alberta Human Rights Commission
<http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/>
- Alberta Human Rights - Information Sheet
https://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins_sheets_booklets/bulletins/Pages/sheets.aspx
- Canada's Approach to Advancing Human Rights
https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/advancing_rights-promouvoir_droits.aspx?lang=eng
- 6 Ways to Protect & Support Human Rights for People Around the World

<https://www.prosperitycandle.com/blogs/news/6-ways-to-protect-support-human-rights>

- CBC Archives: Voting in Canada: How a Privilege Became a Right
<https://www.cbc.ca/archives/topic/voting-in-canada-how-a-privilege-became-a-right>
- CBC Archives: Relocation to Redress: The Internment of Japanese Canadians
<https://www.cbc.ca/archives/topic/relocation-to-redress-the-internment-of-the-japanese-canadians>

Procedures

Students will examine the issue of racism and prejudice through a study and discussion of how different Alberta Mavericks faced the problem. They will research the experience of one Maverick, finding out what they did to get past the prejudice of others, discuss the positives and negatives of their actions, and write about their own personal opinion on prejudice and intolerance.

Begin by introducing the terms “prejudice” and “racism,” asking the students to share thoughts and ideas that they have when they hear the words. Explain that they will be looking at some Canadian historical figures and assessing how they were able to deal with prejudice.

Using the *Mavericks: An Incorrigible History of Alberta* site, students will research about different people that faced some form of prejudice. They may examine the life of:

- James Mah Poy
- John Ware
- Tom Three Persons
- Henrietta Muir Edwards
- The Csavossy Brothers
- Thomas and Lena Gushul
- Emilio Picariello and Filumena Losandro
- Dr. Helen Belyea
- Regina Cheremeteff
- Melvin Crump

What type(s) of prejudice did these people face? How did they deal with the prejudice? What actions did they take? The manner in which they dealt with prejudice may be specified or may only be alluded to in the text.

On their own, students will now create a PMI chart where they list the positives, the minuses, and anything interesting about the Maverick’s experience with prejudice. Then students may

share the stories of the Mavericks and their own thoughts and ideas with the class during a critical discussion about prejudice, racism, and sexism. Questions such as the following may be discussed:

- Why is there such a thing as prejudice?
- Does anyone have the right to treat another human being differently?
- Is there still prejudice in our society?
- What do you think are the basic human rights of any person?
- How would you feel living in these people's place?
- Should there ever be exceptions? For example, is it prejudiced to charge young drivers higher insurance rates? Is it prejudiced to expect certain physical qualifications to do a job?

Have the students write a journal entry about the issue of prejudice. They may write their response as a narrative, a personal reflection, an essay, or even as a poem. They will then create some type of poster that will be used to inform others around the school about prejudice and what they can do about it. It could tell the story of how a Maverick fought against prejudice, what we can do to reduce prejudice, or even the student sharing their feelings or thoughts through the writing or poetry they did previously.

Assessment and Evaluation

- In groups or as a class, students may conference and debrief each other after they have presented their projects. Students should be encouraged to share their personal reflections about how it felt to speak in front of their audience.
- Students may use their rubric as a guide for writing a self-assessment of their project work. They will determine their level for each of the categories and use the criteria specified in their rubric to justify them.

Ideas to Enrich this Project

- The novel, *Underground to Canada*, written by Barbara Smucker is a tale about the Underground Railroad and may be read and studied as another example of historical prejudice.
- Photographs of the Mavericks from the [Glenbow Library and Archives Digital Collection](#) and/or [Google Images](#) may be used on their posters by students to add to the visual appeal. Watercolours or felts could be used to make the photos stand out.