

Canada's
HISTORY
for KIDS

#89 | SEPT 2024
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Canada's History Magazine for Kids

Kayak

CHOOSING CANADA'S LEADERS



PM #40063001



HOW
ELECTIONS WORK



THE RIGHT
TO VOTE

COVER STORY

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 Psst! These symbols spell Kayak in Inuktitut.



Cover illustration: Arden Taylor

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FROM-THE-EDITOR



Why should you care about elections when you're not old enough to vote? It won't be long before you are able to help choose Canada's governments. It's a big responsibility. And the more you know about the history of national elections and voting, the readier you'll be when your turn comes!

Nancy

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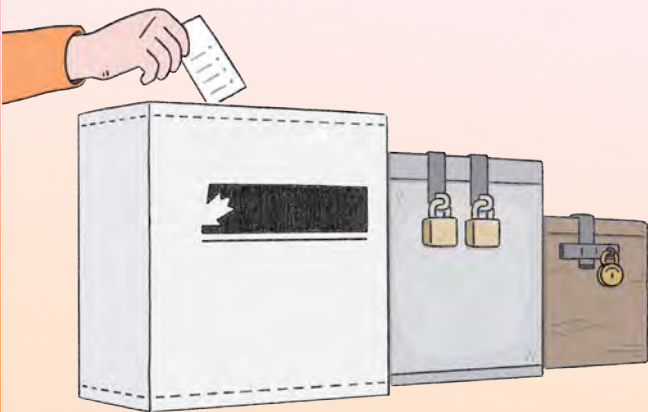
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Canada



HUDSON'S BAY

With appreciation to
Elections Canada and
The Bickle-Wilder Foundation
for their support.



THE FIRST **BALLOT BOXES** (THE CONTAINER WHERE VOTERS PUT THE PAPER THAT SHOWS THEIR CHOICE OF CANDIDATE) WERE MADE OF WOOD. AFTER THAT THEY WERE **METAL** AND NOW ARE MADE OF RECYCLABLE **CARDBOARD**.

PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE PEOPLE WHO VOTED IN THE 2021 ELECTION: 62



IT TAKES LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES FOR MOST PEOPLE TO VOTE IN PERSON IN A FEDERAL ELECTION.

ON A FEDERAL VOTING DAY, ABOUT **250,000** PEOPLE WORK FOR ELECTIONS CANADA. THAT MAKES IT THE LARGEST EMPLOYER IN THE COUNTRY . . . FOR ONE DAY!

ELECTIONS CANADA PROVIDES PENCILS BUT VOTERS CAN BRING THEIR OWN PEN OR OTHER WRITING TOOL TO USE IF THEY PREFER.



A lot has changed in our elections. And a lot still happens before voting day.



THE ELECTION TRAIL

Illustrations by Rhael McGregor

Keeping Track



Early on, local officials made lists of who could vote. In 1885, the job was turned over to the party in power. Naturally, its workers ensured everyone who supported their party was on the list. (Allowed to vote: Well-off men over 21. Not allowed: Women, people of Asian heritage, Indigenous people.) Those in charge sometimes added fake names and changed others to prevent opponents from voting. Lists were rarely updated. The first national list of people eligible to vote was created in 1917. In 1930, government workers started going door to door to take names of electors, a process called **enumeration**. The last one, in 1997, was used to create the electronic **National Register of Electors**.

In 2019, Elections Canada started a list of 14- to 17-year-olds to be added to the national register when they turn 18.

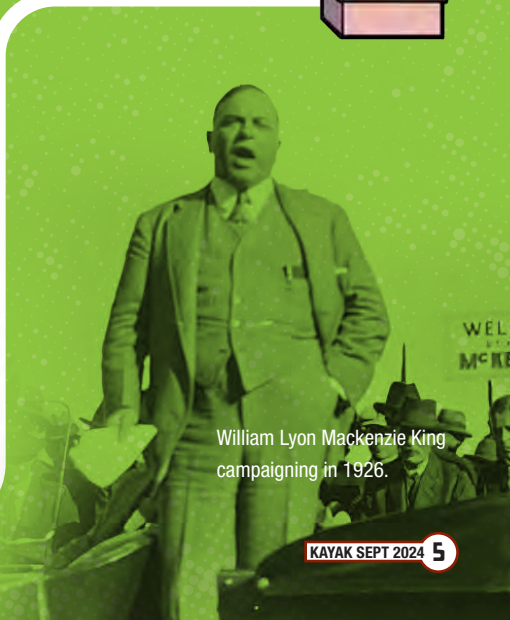
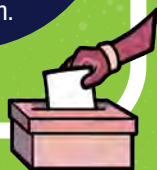




Kicking Off

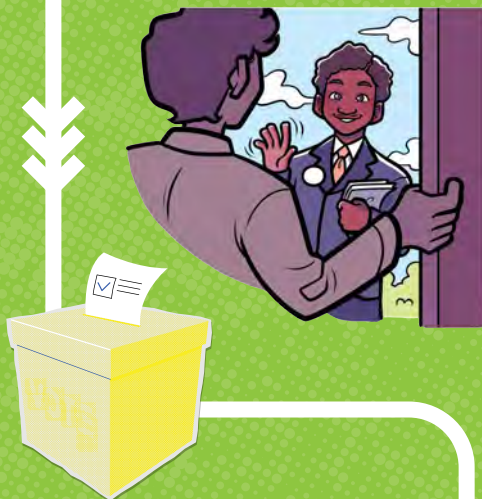
If more than half of the members in the House of Commons belong to the party in power, it's a **majority** government. It can call an election any time it wants. If it has fewer members than the other parties put together, it's a **minority** government. The other parties can get together and vote against the government — on a major bill, not something small. The defeated Prime Minister asks the Governor General to **dissolve** (end) Parliament. The Chief Electoral Officer sends out special documents called the **writs** — instructions to election officials in every riding to hold an election.

In 1926, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's minority Liberal government was defeated in the House of Commons less than a year after the last election. Governor General Julian Byng caused an uproar when he refused King's request to dissolve Parliament. Byng let the Conservatives form the government. No Governor General since then has turned down a Prime Minister who wants to call an election.



William Lyon Mackenzie King campaigning in 1926.

As of 2007, a federal election is to be held on the third Monday of October in the fourth year after the last one. Governments may call an election earlier if they think they're likely to win.



EVERY MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, HAS TO RUN AS A CANDIDATE.

Canada is divided into geographic areas called **ridings**, each of which elects one Member of Parliament. The number of ridings is reviewed every 10 years. In the next election the number of ridings will increase from 338 to 343.

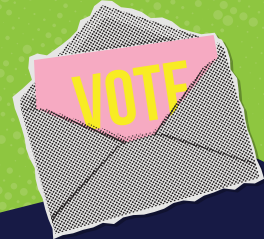


Starting in 1874, candidates used to have to pay money — a deposit — to prove they were serious. The deposit rose to \$1,000 before a judge ruled in 2017 that it was unfair.

A person who wants to be a candidate has to collect 100 signatures (50 in some areas) from voters in their riding.



Brian Mulroney was Prime Minister from 1984 to 1993.



Longest election
campaign:
89 days (1872)

Shortest election
campaign:
20 days (1874)

Canada has many political **parties** — organized groups of people who share ideas about how to run the country. Parties have been around for centuries, but only since 1970 have candidates' parties appeared beside their names on a ballot. The biggest are the Bloc Québécois, the Greens, the Liberals, the Conservatives and the New Democrats. They each choose a person to be their **candidate** in some or all of the country's ridings. A person could also run as an independent, without a party connection.



Winning Over Voters

The time after a government is dissolved and before a new one takes power is called the **campaign**. It lasts 36 to 50 days. Candidates try to persuade people in their riding to vote for them. They speak at public meetings, do interviews and go “door-knocking” — dropping by people’s homes to introduce themselves and their party’s **platform**. That’s a collection of the things the party promises to do if it wins the election.



At first, candidates could spend as much as they wanted on whatever they wanted while trying to get elected. In 1874, new rules meant they had to say how much they spent and on what but didn't limit that spending. For years, there also weren't any limits on how much companies and individual people could donate to a candidate or party for an election. Starting in 1920, candidates had to say who gave them money and how much. The 1974 *Election Expenses Act* set out a lot more rules about spending and donations.

Since the 1968 election, leaders of the biggest parties have taken part in debates in French and English on national television during the campaign.



CANDIDATES ARE SAID TO "RUN" IN AN ELECTION, OR TO BE "RUNNING FOR OFFICE." IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH HOW FAST THEY MOVE!

Voting Early

Until 1920, voters were out of luck if they had to be away on election day. That year, new rules allowed specific groups to vote early: travelling salespeople, railway workers and sailors. Today, anyone can vote during six days of **advance polls** that end a week before election day. Since 1993, qualified voters who live in Canada or overseas can vote by mail. This is known as a **special ballot**. They have to return their ballot before voting day. Once they are registered to vote this way, they can't vote in person.



A **BALLOT** is a card printed with the names of all the candidates in the riding and their parties. Voters mark the circle beside the person they support.

TO VOTE IN A FEDERAL ELECTION, YOU MUST BE:

- ✓ 18 OR OLDER
- ✓ A CANADIAN CITIZEN

Election Day



A polling station (or polling place or just poll) is where people go to vote, or cast a ballot.



Early on, federal votes could take several days. Sometimes members of the party in power set it up so the first voting days were in ridings they knew they could win. Victories there meant later votes were more likely to go their way. In modern elections, voters have to bring identification to prove who they are. A line is drawn through their names on the voters list. They mark their ballot in private and put it in a box without anyone else seeing their choice. Candidates are allowed to have a representative called a **scrutineer** watch as election workers count the ballots.



Most people put an X in the circle beside the candidate they're voting for. But sometimes there are other scribbles instead. Election officials have to figure out whether the mark is clear enough to count as a vote for one candidate. If not, they can't count it. The same goes if the voter marks it in any way that could identify them.



Canada stretches across six time zones. Starting in 1997, voting hours have been set up to be as similar as possible across the country, but results from eastern Canada are already available while people in B.C. are still voting. It used to be illegal to reveal results until all polling stations were closed. That law was removed in 2014 because there was no way to stop the news from spreading.

SOME VOTERS MIGHT CHOOSE TO SPOIL THEIR BALLOT AS A PROTEST. THAT MEANS WRITING SOMETHING ON IT OR MARKING IT UP SO IT CAN'T BE COUNTED. ELECTION WORKERS NOTE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SPOILED BALLOTS.





Winner


In each riding, election workers announce (unofficially) which candidate won the most votes. (Elections Canada usually confirms the count within a few days.) That person wins a **seat** in the House of Commons, becoming a Member of Parliament (MP) to represent their riding. We don't vote directly for the Prime Minister. The leader of the party that wins the most seats usually becomes Prime Minister. Our electoral system is known as **first past the post** — think of a race, where the winner is the first person to pass a marker.

IF AN MP QUILTS OR DIES, THE GOVERNMENT CALLS A **BYELECTION** (UNLESS IT'S TOO CLOSE TO THE NEXT ELECTION). **BYELECTIONS** WORK LIKE REGULAR ELECTIONS, BUT ONLY HAPPEN IN RIDINGS WHERE A SEAT NEEDS TO BE FILLED.

If you put all the votes together into something known as the **popular vote**, it's possible for a party to win the most votes, but not win the most seats.



Fresh Start



The Governor General invites the party that won the most seats to form the government, and its leader to take over as Prime Minister. Within a few weeks, Canada's new government takes its place.



THE PERSON IN CHARGE

As Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, Stéphane Perrault has a very important job. He explained it to *Kayak*.

Q: HOW DO OUR FEDERAL ELECTIONS COMPARE TO THOSE IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

A: We enjoy a high level of trust here in Canada, and that's something that we care a lot about and we work hard to maintain. Of course, the size and diversity of the country makes it extraordinary. Things are very different in a fly-in Indigenous community and the downtown of a big city. Other countries with presidential systems know when their elections are happening years in advance. We don't have that, so when an election is called, we first set up 500 offices, and then we have literally a few days to find 16,000 polling locations. Also, very, very few countries vote on Monday.

Q: WHAT DOES ELECTIONS CANADA DO TO ENSURE OUR ELECTIONS ARE SAFE AND TRUSTWORTHY?

A: We were the first truly independent body to manage elections in the world, and we still have complete independence from the government and political parties. It's a public, transparent process with a lot of safeguards. We make sure people can only vote once. And when the votes are in, everybody can see how the ballots are counted. If anyone has a complaint, there are ways they can challenge the results. If people hear rumours about a concern with elections, it's important that they check their sources and make sure they have the right information.

Q: WHAT MAKES ELECTION DAY SPECIAL?

A: When you're in a lineup at a Canadian election, there's a sense of calm in the room. Because of the number of parties and candidates, you know that most people in your polling location likely will not vote your way. But it's a peaceful process. That's very Canadian.

Q: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO VOTE?

A: Our democracy is something we can't take for granted, and it only works if people use it. During an election, we have this ability to have our voice heard about what we want, but also to hear other ideas and get an understanding of other people. And again, it only works if people participate.

Q: WHY SHOULD KIDS CARE ABOUT ELECTIONS?

A: One day soon, they'll have this important role to play in our society. They can get their names on the Register of Future Electors when they're 14 so they'll be ready to go when they're 18. We know that if young Canadians vote in the first few elections as adults, the research shows they will vote for the rest of their lives.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT CANADIAN KIDS TO KNOW ABOUT OUR ELECTIONS OR OUR VOTING SYSTEM?

A: The way we run our elections, it's really a system of Canadians serving their neighbours. People don't realize that. But this huge workforce that we have is all members of your community coming together as workers and voters to make those decisions.

Stéphane Perrault signs the writs for the 2019 federal election.



The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) must be fair and neutral to all political parties. That's why the CEO is the only Canadian citizen over 18 who's not allowed to vote.



Who Gets to Vote?

How old should you have to be to vote in a Canadian federal election?

In a recent survey by Children First Canada, seven out of 10 kids said they were okay with the idea of lowering Canada's voting age to 16. The idea comes up in Parliament and provincial legislatures all the time. The main reason usually given for suggesting the change is that young people deserve to help choose governments that will affect their future. The latest effort to drop the voting age was in September 2022. NDP Member of Parliament Taylor Bachrach proposed giving 16- and 17-year-olds the vote in federal elections. The bill was defeated 247 to 77.



What do you think is the right age for Canadians to start voting?

Should 16-year-olds be able to vote?

Yes

- ✓ We already give 16-year-olds the responsibility of driving.
- ✓ Having the vote while they're in high school will encourage younger Canadians to learn more about issues that affect the country.
- ✓ People over 18 don't necessarily take voting seriously or inform themselves.

No

- ✗ Teenagers don't understand or care about the issues.
- ✗ Parents could pressure their kids into voting a certain way.
- ✗ Teenagers aren't mature enough to vote.

An organization called Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), although not the government, has important responsibilities in the territory. Inuit can vote for leaders of the NTI starting at age 16.



istockphoto

In about 85 per cent of countries that hold elections, the voting age starts at age 18. Countries that allow 16-year-olds to vote in national elections include Brazil, Argentina and Austria.



IT'S MY RIGHT!

Written by Allyson Gulliver • Illustrated by Diana Bolton

OCTOBER 28, 1972, EDMONTON

Eric held up a jean jacket decorated with bright yellow happy faces. “Look! Only a dollar.”

Marianne raised one eyebrow. “It’s kind of cool. Unlike you.”

The woman behind the table piled with clothes, dishes and toys tried not to laugh. “You should be nicer to your little brother, even if he’s taller than you are.”

“I’m smarter, too, Mrs. Nakamura,” said Eric as he handed her a dollar bill and slipped the jean jacket on.

“Oh, please!” Marianne said. “I’m 21. You’re still in high school.”

“But I can vote on Monday just like you can,” Eric retorted.

Marianne was looking through a box full of records. “Big deal,” she said absent-mindedly. “Oh, wow!” She held up her find. “The Guess Who!”

Mrs. Nakamura looked serious. “Back up, young lady. Voting is a VERY big deal! My family has only been allowed to vote in Canada a little longer than you’ve been alive.”

Eric and Marianne stared at her in shock as a man with long black hair looked up and nodded. “That’s around the time Inuit were able to vote. Took Canada even longer to allow Cree people like me. I’m Dan, by the way. Just moved in.” He reached out to shake hands.

“That’s terrible!” Eric’s face showed his disbelief. “Not that you moved in,” he added quickly. “The voting thing.”

“Of course, some of us didn’t want anything to do with elections,” Dan added. “Still don’t. Lots of us just want to govern ourselves.”

He picked up a big ceramic statue of a dog. “What do you want for this?” he asked Mrs. Nakamura.

“Please — just take it!” she said with a laugh. “I’ll be so happy not to have to dust it!”

“Thanks!” Dan said. “Nice to meet you all. Now for some butter tarts!” He tucked the statue under his arm and headed over to the bake sale table.

Mrs. Nakamura sighed. “You don’t understand how lucky you are, Marianne. A lot of people in Canada haven’t been able to vote until very recently. That’s why I care about it so much.”

Her mind seemed to be elsewhere as she arranged, then rearranged some glass vases. “My family is from Japan, but I was born here. I’m Canadian, but that didn’t matter. The government said we didn’t deserve a voice in our own country’s elections.”

She shook her head. “It wasn’t just us, or people like Dan, or people whose families came from China or India. Your grandmother once told me how much it upset her that for the longest time, your grandfather could vote and she couldn’t.”

Marianne’s face went red, and then white. “I . . . I had no idea. I always thought election talk was so boring.”



But I can't imagine Eric being allowed to vote and not me."

Her dad wandered up. "I have strict instructions not to buy any more stuff until we sell all of ours." He waved back at his wife.

Eric piped up. "Hey Dad — do you always vote?"

"You bet I do!" his father replied firmly. "Your grampa always told me that in the country where he grew up, people died fighting for that right." He nodded at his neighbour. "Including many Canadians from Chinese and Japanese backgrounds. A lot of people in the world have no say at all in who their government is or what it does. But we do."

Mrs. Nakamura caught Eric and Marianne glancing at each other and smiled. "So . . .?"

Marianne looked doubtful. "I still don't see how my one vote makes any difference."

"Well, what do you care about?" her dad asked. "Now, what if everyone else who cared about the same things also thought their vote didn't matter so they didn't bother to go to the polls on Monday?"

Marianne threw up her hands. "Okay, okay! Voting matters. I get it!"

"It's also a big responsibility," Mrs. Nakamura added. "As far as I'm concerned, if you don't vote, you'd better not complain about the election results."

Eric stood up tall. "I'm going to vote! After all, it's my right."

"And it's my right, too!" Marianne declared. **K**



Left: This group representing the Japanese Canadian Citizens League asked the House of Commons in Ottawa for the right to vote.

Below: Members of the Hiawatha and Curve Lake First Nations in Ontario voted for the first time in a 1960 federal byelection. Shown left to right: Lawrence Salleby, Chief Ralph Loucks, Lucy Muskratt and Eldon Muskratt.



The characters in this story aren't real, but the 1972 Canadian election was the first after the voting age dropped from 21 to 18. There have been many changes to voting rights over Canada's history. At first, only men who were wealthy enough could vote in federal elections. Before confederation, some women property-owners voted. Black or Métis men weren't barred, but few were wealthy enough to qualify. The only way First Nations men could vote was to give up their treaty rights. In 1918, after decades of fighting for their rights, Canadian women were finally allowed to vote in national elections. The 1934 *Dominion Franchise Act* set national rules, but there were still many groups of people who were barred from voting. A group of Canadians of Japanese heritage travelled to Ottawa in 1936 to explain to a House of Commons committee why they should have the right to vote. They were turned down. Canadians of Chinese, Japanese and east Indian descent were only able to vote in 1948. Religious groups like Mennonites, Doukhobors and Hutterites who opposed serving in the military had the vote taken away during the two world wars. And it wasn't until 1950 that Inuit could vote, although ballot boxes often weren't even sent to their communities. In 1960 First Nations people in Canada could finally vote nationally without having to give up treaty rights. Among the more recent groups to get the right to vote in federal elections were people with intellectual disabilities (1993) and prisoners (2004).

Scenes from the Bad Old Days

ILLUSTRATED BY AVERY HELM
WRITTEN BY NANCY PAYNE

ELECTIONS IN CANADA WEREN'T ALWAYS AS
PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY AS THEY ARE NOW...



YOUR
CANDIDATE
ISN'T FIT FOR
OFFICE!

WELL,
YOURS IS
A PIG IN A
SUIT!



SAINT JOHN COUNTY, N.B., 1858



ALL THIS LAND IN ONE MAN'S HANDS MEANS JUST ONE VOTE.

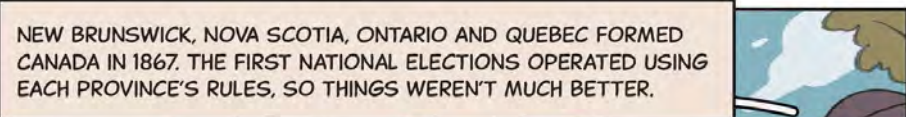
BUT WHEN I DIVIDE IT INTO 250 PARCELS...

...THAT'S 250 NEW LANDOWNERS!

AND 250 NEW VOTES!



NEW BRUNSWICK, NOVA SCOTIA, ONTARIO AND QUEBEC FORMED CANADA IN 1867. THE FIRST NATIONAL ELECTIONS OPERATED USING EACH PROVINCE'S RULES, SO THINGS WEREN'T MUCH BETTER.



TOO BAD YOU LOST.



GET ME TO THE NEXT RIDING FAST ENOUGH AND MAYBE I CAN WIN THERE!

VOTERS HAD TO MAKE THEIR CHOICE BY STATING IT IN PUBLIC.



WAIT!



I CHANGED MY MIND...

I THINK...

IN 1855, NEW BRUNSWICK BECAME THE FIRST PLACE
IN NORTH AMERICA TO SWITCH TO VOTING IN PRIVATE.



FINALLY, THE VOTE
WILL BE FAIR!



THIS SECRET BALLOT
IS A TERRIBLE IDEA.



A MAN SHOULD BE WILLING
TO STAND UP FOR WHAT HE
BELIEVES IN, NOT SNEAK OFF
TO SHOVE A PAPER INTO A BOX.



EVEN AFTER CANADA STARTED USING SECRET BALLOTS
IN 1874, PRESSURES AND PRIZES INTERFERED.



THERE IS ONLY ONE
PROPER CHOICE!

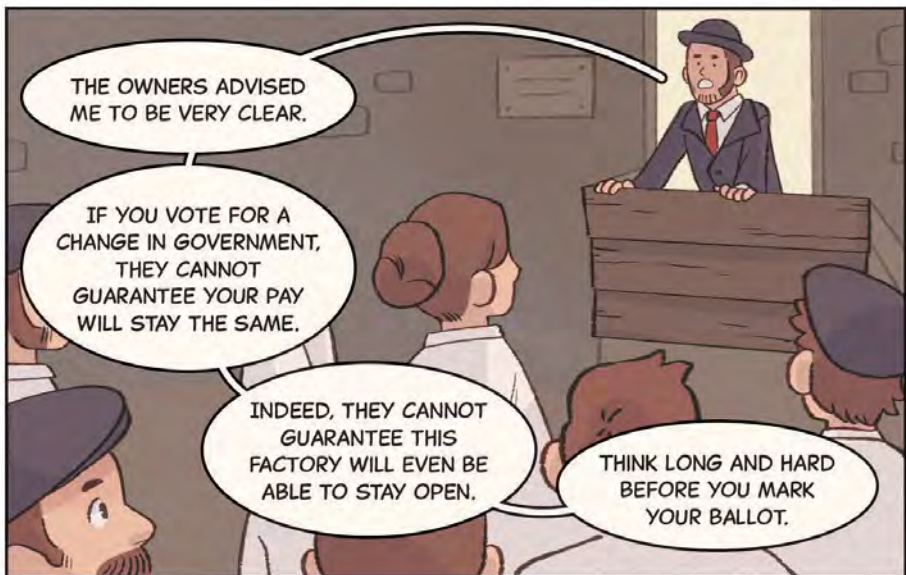
IF YOU VOTE ANOTHER WAY,
I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU
IN THIS CHURCH!

THE OWNERS ADVISED
ME TO BE VERY CLEAR.

IF YOU VOTE FOR A
CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT,
THEY CANNOT
GUARANTEE YOUR PAY
WILL STAY THE SAME.

INDEED, THEY CANNOT
GUARANTEE THIS
FACTORY WILL EVEN BE
ABLE TO STAY OPEN.

THINK LONG AND HARD
BEFORE YOU MARK
YOUR BALLOT.



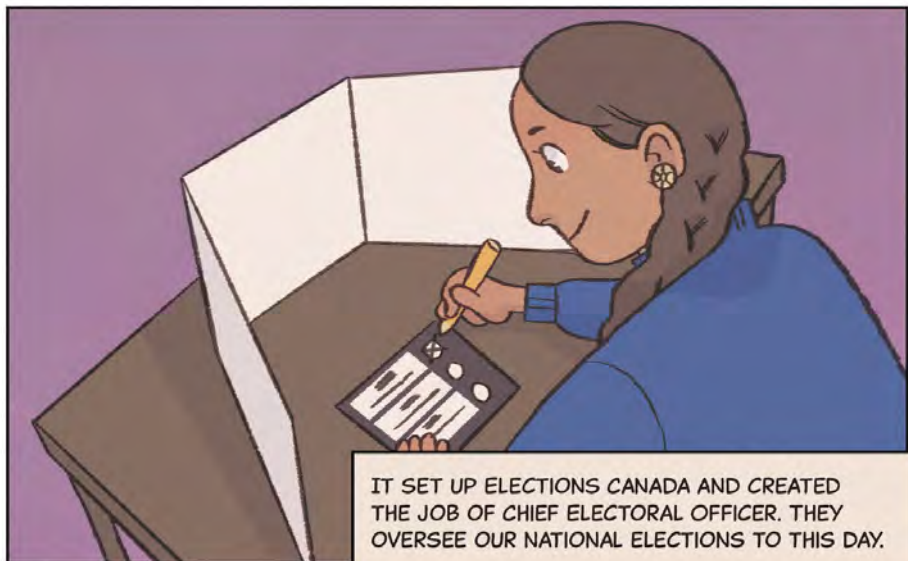




WE'RE NOT MAKING ANY OF THIS UP. LYING, FIGHTING, BRIBES, PRESSURE IN CHURCH AND AT WORK – IT WAS ALL COMMON FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY. ABOUT 20 PEOPLE DIED IN ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE BEFORE 1867.



IN THE 1874 FEDERAL ELECTION, NEARLY ONE-THIRD OF THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS WERE FOUND TO HAVE CHEATED AND HAD TO QUIT. THINGS FINALLY STARTED TO CHANGE IN 1920, WHEN THE GOVERNMENT PASSED THE *DOMINION ELECTIONS ACT*.



IT SET UP ELECTIONS CANADA AND CREATED THE JOB OF CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER. THEY OVERSEE OUR NATIONAL ELECTIONS TO THIS DAY.

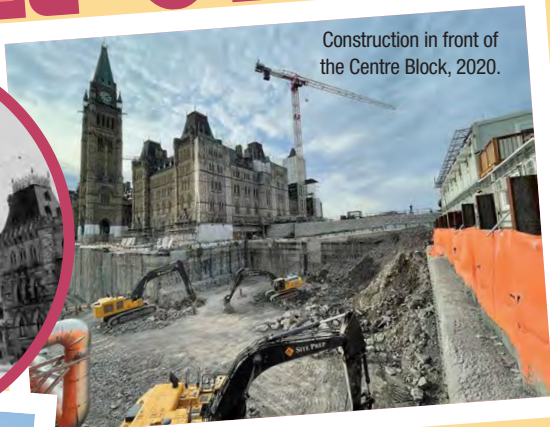
Learn more
about Canadian
elections and how
they've changed.

CHOOSE YOUR VISIT

The Library of Parliament
and Centre Block, the day
after the 1916 fire.



Construction in front of
the Centre Block, 2020.



Canadian Museum of
Nature, Ottawa.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members of Parliament won't be back in the Centre Block on Parliament Hill until at least 2030, when a huge renovation project is done. It's not the first time the House of Commons has moved. After the 1916 fire, it was held down the street in what is now the Canadian Museum of Nature until the Centre Block was rebuilt in 1920.

HEAD TO THE POLLS

If you get the chance, ask an adult in your home if you can go with them when they vote in the next federal election. Sometimes voters have to wait in line, but voting itself takes just a few minutes. It's pretty cool to see people choosing who will be your Member of Parliament and which party will form the next government!



BALLOTS AT SCHOOL

Many elementary and high schools participate in a program called Student Vote at the same time as a federal, provincial or territorial election. Kids learn about their ridings' candidates and platforms. Just like in the real election, they vote for the candidate they want to win. It's always interesting to see who the students would have elected!

In the 2021 federal election, more than 800,000 students at 5,900 schools took part in Student Vote.



There's also a youth edition of something called Vote Compass. It's an online tool to help voters decide which party's ideas are closest to theirs.

spot the differences

We've changed a few things from the top picture to the bottom one. How many differences can you find? This photo shows nurses voting in wartime France in 1917, some of the first Canadian women ever to do so.



There are
at least six
differences
between
the photos!



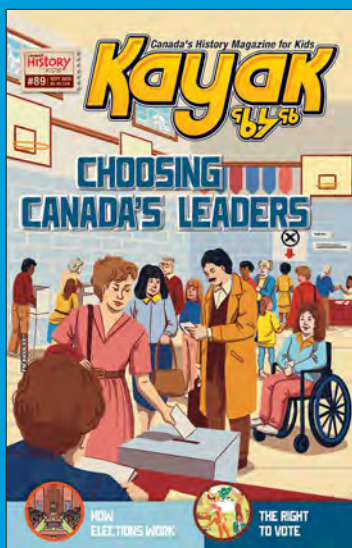
HIDDEN PICTURES



How sharp-eyed are you? See if you can find each of these objects or images in the comic **Scenes from the Bad Old Days** that starts on p. 20.

ANSWERS

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES P. 28



HIDDEN PICTURES P. 29



TEACHER'S CORNER

You can find classroom material in both French and English to go with this issue of *Kayak*.

Just visit CanadasHistory.ca/voting or HistoireCanada.ca/vote.



English



Français

VOICE YOUR VOTE



Do you think Canadians should be able to start voting at 16?

Voting is an important right and responsibility of Canadian citizens. In the article "Who Gets to Vote?" on page 14, we provided reasons for and against lowering the voting age to 16. Now we want to hear what you think. Vote in our online poll at CanadasHistory.ca/VoiceYourVote for a chance to win a Kayak prize pack!



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Oshki Wupoowane The Blanket Fund

The HBC Point Blanket has been called many things throughout its history: an essential trade item, an enduring emblem of Canada, a carrier of disease, and a symbol of colonialism. We begin to unpack and acknowledge the many layers of symbolism the blanket embodies in history, art, pop culture, and commerce.

Moving forward, 100% of net proceeds of all Point Blanket sales will go to Indigenous Peoples. Hudson's Bay Foundation and the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund have partnered to launch **Oshki Wupoowane | The Blanket Fund.**



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