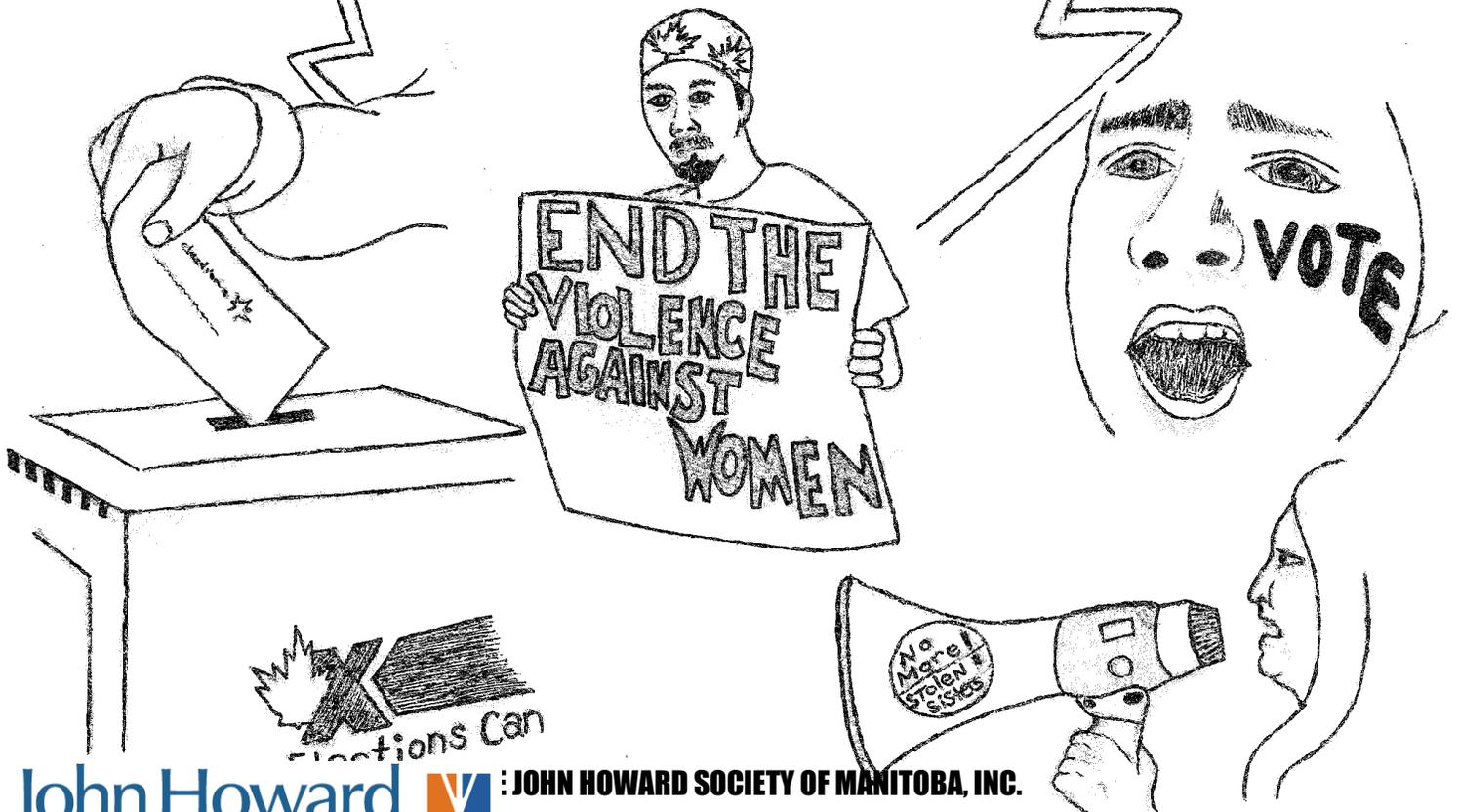


# It's Your Country, Too!



**On voting, volunteering  
and making the world a better place**



Developed by  
**Jacquie Nicholson**  
For the John Howard Society of Manitoba, Inc.

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## Lesson #1

### What is Literacy?

The word “literacy” refers to how well a person can read and write. Reading and writing are important skills for everyone, no matter how old you are, where you live, or what you do for a living.

Many people want to get better at reading and writing so they can finish Grade 12 or get a GED. This is a great goal to have, but there are also a lot of other good reasons to practice these skills, even if you don't plan to go back to school.

We use literacy skills every day. We read recipes and bus schedules. We fill out job application forms or court documents. We search for information on the Internet. We read stories to our kids or read the directions on a bottle of medicine so we know how much to give them when they are sick. Some of us read for fun, too: books, magazines, poetry, newspapers. The list goes on and on.

There are many reasons why people can't read or write as well as they would like. Maybe they left school early to get a job or because they got in trouble with the law. Maybe they didn't learn much about reading or writing while they were in school. Maybe they speak another language and are learning English for the first time.

It's never too late to get better at reading and writing. The John Howard Society literacy program helps people to improve these skills using workbooks like this one. This book focuses on voting, volunteering, and other ways of making a difference in your community or country. Learning to read is important, but it's also important to be able to use the information you read for something useful. You know, like changing the world!

## Exercise #1

Tell us a bit about your reading and writing skills. If someone is marking this workbook for you, it will help them to know a little bit more about you.

What grade did you last finish in school? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you remember how long ago it was or how old you were?

\_\_\_\_\_

Think about how you spend your day. Can you think of two ways that you use reading skills?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Can you think of two ways that you use writing skills every day?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is one literacy skill you'd like to improve? Do you want to be able to read more quickly? To read larger words? To spell better? To use commas? To write an essay or a short story? Something else?

Tell us about your most important reading and writing goal.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson #2

### What is Politics?

What comes to mind when you hear the word “politics”?

Some people might say “voting” or “elections,” or perhaps “government,” “prime minister,” and “House of Commons.” This book will certainly discuss those things, but it will also discuss other types of power, authority, and decision-making in our society.

The word **power** means having strength and the ability to take action, give orders, and make decisions. The word **authority** means that many people will cooperate with the actions and decisions and obey the orders of a person or group with power. The prime minister of Canada has power and authority. So did King Henry IV of England and Emperor Augustus of Rome. So did the principal at your elementary school. So does the commander of an army, the manager of a restaurant, the foreman at a construction site, the superintendent of a prison, or the leader of a street gang.

When we talk about politics, we are often talking about how people in power use their authority to make decisions that affect others. We are also talking about how citizens try to take part in those decisions. We are talking about people's opinions on important issues like education, health care, crime, poverty, taxes, and human rights.

Casting a vote in an election can be one way of making your voice heard, and we'll talk about how to participate in elections. We will also talk about activism, volunteering, and political issues in prisons.

Have you thought about ways you can make the world a different and better place? This book is one place to start.

## Exercise #2

Some people think that politics is boring, and sometimes they're probably right. But they also may only be thinking about certain types of politics. The statements below are all examples of politics. Your job is to rate each one on a scale of one to ten, where one is “really boring to me,” ten is “really interesting to me,” and five is somewhere in the middle.

1. The Canadian government passes a law stopping judges from giving inmates 2-for-1 credit for time served in remand. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The City of Winnipeg decides to build a new football stadium. \_\_\_\_\_
3. A group of LGBTQ students at a high school request that their school bring in a guest speaker to talk about the problem of bullying. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Workers at a construction site get fed up with working unpaid overtime and go on strike. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Inmates in Georgia, U.S.A. stage a strike to protest poor living conditions. For six days they refuse to leave their cells or report to work. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Gary writes a letter to the *Winnipeg Free Press* about some recent shootings in the North End and how he thinks we should solve the problem of violence in the neighbourhood. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The Province of Manitoba passes a law making it illegal to talk on cellphones while driving. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Protestors smash store windows at the G20 summit in Toronto, where leaders of the world's wealthiest countries are holding meetings. \_\_\_\_\_

9. Residents of a First Nations community demand that the federal government take action to ensure that their homes have running water. \_\_\_\_\_

10. The Province of Manitoba increases the minimum wage. \_\_\_\_\_

11. A group of Mohawk people in Quebec stage a blockade to prevent their burial grounds from being turned into a golf course by the Town of Oka. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Hundreds of thousands of protesters in Egypt march and chant in the streets for weeks, trying to convince their president to step down. \_\_\_\_\_

13. Scientists, students, environmentalists and First Nations line up on the White House lawn, risking arrest to oppose the Keystone XL, a pipeline designed to carry oil from Canada's tar sands to the U.S. Gulf Coast. \_\_\_\_\_

Choose one of the situations above that you found interesting. Write a few sentences about why you found it interesting, and write down any questions you have. Is there more you would like to learn about the situation?

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## In Their Own Words: What Political Issues Matter to JHS Students?

“Political issues” can be anything that affects our society, or a certain group of people in society. We interviewed students from the John Howard Society literacy program about what political issues are important to them. Here is what they had to say:

“Education and the environment are most important for me. Those are what I pay attention to during an election. We shouldn't be charged so much for books – maybe we could try to recycle them. And I think it's important to get better fuel economy for vehicles, and other ways of helping the environment.”

“The particular issues that interest me have to do with lower income families, Child and Family Services legislation, and law and the justice system and all its intricacies. For me, poverty and crime are two of the biggest subjects for anybody seeking office.”

“There's plenty of programs, but then you keep hearing about smaller programs getting their doors shut because of lack of funding. Well, the money it costs to keep that one person in jail could fund all of those programs for a whole year. So why not save some money by spending more on programs and rehabilitation?”

“There doesn't need to be broken families and all that. There's ways of teaching parents how to be parents without yanking the kids out of the home. We should be addressing their problems before they get out of hand. CFS and agencies like that need to be more approachable for parents. There's that threat of 'We're going to take your kids away,' but if a parent was able to approach them without fear, then they could ask for some kind of help. I was a first-time parent, and there's no rulebook. People have advice, but you're learning on your own, and especially for single parents, it can be overwhelming.”

“I'm interested in health and marijuana issues. If alcohol is legal, why shouldn't marijuana be legal? As far as I'm concerned, alcohol is the worst drug that they've ever thought about making, and you can buy it in the store. It's stupid. I've even told my daughter, 'I don't care if you smoke marijuana. Just stay away from alcohol or pills.’”

“Affordable housing is the biggest one. It's crazy trying to find a place. And the welfare system, well that's just a joke. They won't give you a rent form until you find a place; you can't find a place until you get a rent form. It's just stupid. They tell you, 'You can stay at Siloam.' Well, how do you look for a job when you're staying at a homeless shelter? What if you don't get a bed that night when you go back? That's not a permanent address.”

“The political issues most important to me are the issues you never see addressed in the mainstream media. Economic disparity. Political immunity. Corporate cover-ups. Why is the majority of wealth retained by such a small percentage of the population? Why aren't corporate criminals prosecuted or even investigated?”

“How to make a better world? Get rid of money, for one thing. All the corruptness in the world comes from money. If there wasn't money there would be no need to steal. Everybody says it's the drugs, it's the drugs. Sure, that's part of it, but if I had money I wouldn't have a drug problem.”

“Helping poor people. There's more poor people than there are rich people, and I think there should be some kind of balance.”

## Questions to think about:

Are there any common themes in these quotes?

What experiences might these people share?

How do their concerns compare to your own?

Feel free to discuss these questions with a friend or literacy tutor.

## Lesson #3

# The Role of Governments

“Government” is the name given to the group of people who make decisions for the rest of us. Most citizens agree that there are things every society needs: roads, hospitals, schools, and rules about things like crime and safety.

Canada is a representative democracy, which means citizens vote on who will represent them in government. Whether or not you vote, and whether or not you keep up with what's going on in Canadian politics, you should know that government decisions affect you.

One responsibility of government is to spend money. Governments are in charge of paying for the building of everything from highways to hospitals, prisons to public swimming pools, schools to sewage treatment plants. Governments pay the salaries of doctors and nurses, teachers, police officers, correctional officers and librarians. The Canadian government spent \$280.5 billion in the year 2010.

Before you start feeling too special about all the money spent on your behalf, don't forget where it comes from. Another responsibility of government is to collect taxes from citizens. These taxes include property taxes, income taxes, Employment Insurance deductions, GST and PST, and extra taxes on products like alcohol and cigarettes. So if you ever start to think that politics and government don't matter, remind yourself that these are the people who decide how your money gets spent!

One of the most interesting things governments do is make laws. Our daily lives are affected by hundreds and thousands of laws: criminal laws against theft and violence; laws about how old we have to be to drive, vote, drink, or join the military; laws about

how much notice a landlord has to give us before increasing our rent, and how much that increase can be; the list goes on and on. Lesson #5 will discuss how exactly laws get made in Canada.



Public schools are one example of a service funded with government money. Schools are the responsibility of the provincial government. (Image: koratmember / FreeDigitalPhotos.net)

## Literacy Tip: Complete Sentences

Throughout this workbook you'll be asked to answer questions in complete sentences wherever you can. A complete sentence is one that has a subject (the person or thing in the sentence that is doing something) and that contains a complete thought.

The following are not complete sentences:

Can be dangerous.

Went to the store.

A very talented kid.

They are missing the subject, which is the most important part of any sentence. Adding the subject is easy enough, though. It's whatever comes to mind when you say, “What can be dangerous?” or “Who went to the store?”

Snowmobiles can be dangerous.

Tony went to the store.

My little sister is a very talented kid.

Sentences also need to contain a complete thought. They need to explain what the subject is doing, or being.

The following aren't complete sentences:

A bicycle with a broken wheel.

The capital of Manitoba.

Craig and Robin.

Making a sentence complete sometimes involves filling in missing information, answering the question “Is what?” or “Does what?”

A bicycle with a broken wheel isn't much good to anybody.

The capital of Manitoba is Winnipeg.

## Exercise #3

Decide whether the following sentences are complete, or whether information is still missing. Write “C” if the sentence is complete, and “I” if it is incomplete.

1. Government decisions affect you, whether you vote or not. \_\_\_\_\_
2. In a democratic country like Canada. \_\_\_\_\_
3. One responsibility of government is to collect taxes. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are affected by hundreds of thousands of laws. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Property taxes, employment insurance, GST and PST. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Governments make laws. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The Canadian government spent \$280.5 billion in the year 2010. \_\_\_\_\_
8. How laws get made in Canada. \_\_\_\_\_

Choose three of the incomplete sentences and rewrite them below to make sure they are complete.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson #4

# Types of Government

We don't have just one government that manages all laws, taxes, and spending for everyone in the country. The different areas of public life are dealt with by different types of government.

The federal government is the one you probably hear the most about. It is made up of the prime minister and cabinet, and consists of 308 Members of Parliament (who are elected) and 105 Senators (who are appointed). The Parliament Building is located in Ottawa, and it's the place where some of the biggest decisions in the country are made. The federal government makes decisions about military and defence, criminal law, immigration, the postal service, and Aboriginal people living in First Nations communities.

Each province also has its own provincial government. In Manitoba, our provincial government works out of the Legislative Buildings on Broadway Avenue. The Legislature is led by the premier and includes 56 other elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. They deal with the areas of health care, education, welfare, traffic laws, marriage laws, and property rights.

Municipal governments look after the business of a city or town. Winnipeg's municipal government is the City of Winnipeg, and operates out of City Hall on Main Street. Municipal governments elect a mayor and town councillors, who make decisions about a city or town's emergency services and policing, animal control, water and sewage, libraries, public transportation, and parking laws.

First Nations have their own forms of government, which manage all aspects of the First

Nation, including those that would be managed by the provincial government in other communities. The government of a First Nation is called the band council, and is made up of a chief and councillors who are elected by the people of the community. While some communities are independent nations, others unite with one another to form tribal councils, such as the Island Lake and Dakota Obijway tribal councils in Manitoba. Bands may also form national organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations, which represents the chiefs of the over 600 bands throughout Canada.

We'll learn more about Aboriginal peoples' governance and self-determination later in this book.

## Literacy Tip: Punctuation

“Punctuation” refers to the symbols in a piece of writing that guide us along, showing us how to read it. Commas ( , ), quotation marks ( “ ” ), colons ( : ), and semi-colons ( ; ) are all examples of punctuation.

This lesson focuses on end punctuation, the type found only at the very end of a sentence. There are three types of end punctuation: periods ( . ), exclamation points ( ! ), and question marks ( ? ).

A period is used most often, and makes a statement. For example:

The federal government is the one you probably hear most about.  
I'm working evenings this week.  
The forecast is calling for snow and a temperature of -13.

A question mark, of course, asks a question. For example:

Where are the Parliament Buildings located?  
What part of the city are you from?  
Can you pass the potatoes, please?

An exclamation point is used to show excitement, fear, or anger. For example:

Dammit! I'm sick and tired of tax increases!  
Help!  
Happy birthday!

## Exercise #4

Are the following areas the responsibility of the federal, provincial, or municipal governments?

1. Bus fares in Winnipeg go up from \$2.35 to \$2.50. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Canada accepted about 250,000 new immigrants in 2010. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The speed limits on some of the smaller highways outside the city have gone up from 90 km/hour to 100 km/hour. \_\_\_\_\_
4. More Canadian soldiers are sent to Afghanistan. \_\_\_\_\_
5. You come out of the store to find a ticket on your windshield because you forgot to put money in the parking meter. \_\_\_\_\_
6. The government had to spend extra money on vaccines and medical care in 2009/2010 because of the H1N1 virus. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Manitoba's social assistance shelter allowance hasn't been increased in 18 years, which has anti-poverty activists concerned. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The government proposes longer jail or prison sentences for drug offences.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson #5

### How Laws Get Made

All three types of governments have the ability to make laws for the country, province, or city they are in charge of. Many of the examples of government power you just read about in Exercise #4 were the results of laws.

New laws are being made all the time. For example, the Government of Canada passed 39 new laws in the 2010-2011 session of Parliament. You probably read about some of them in the newspaper.

A new law is created when someone working in the federal Parliament (or provincial legislature, or town council) gets an idea, and proposes that it become law. The idea then needs to be voted on before it can become law.

In the federal Parliament, for example, the new idea is called a bill. In the “first reading,” the bill is read out loud in the House of Commons so that everyone will know what is being proposed. All of the other Members of Parliament (MPs) will now hear about the bill, and so will some of the public. At this point, the news media might report on the proposed law.

A couple of months later, the bill is read again in the House of Commons, and this time the MPs discuss it and vote on it. These discussions can get very heated if not everyone agrees on the new law – and they usually don't! If at least half of the MPs present vote in favour of the bill, it goes on to the next stage. A smaller committee of MPs takes it and studies it paragraph by paragraph, working out some of the small details of the bill.

Once the committee has made their changes, the bill comes before the House of

Commons again for its third reading. Again MPs vote, and if the bill gets over half of the votes, it is approved... at least for now. See, it still needs to go through all the same steps in the Senate. (The Senate, you might remember, is the other half of the federal government, the folks who are appointed rather than elected.)

Finally, the bill needs to get royal assent from the Queen. Yes, you heard that right. A lot of people don't realize that Canada's official head of state is actually the Queen of England. Her representative in Canada is called the governor general.

But even though the governor general is technically in charge, he or she has little to do with making laws. In fact, if a bill is passed by both the House of Commons and the Senate, the governor general will sign it automatically.

You can see how it sometimes takes months or even years for a bill to be passed. Both the provincial and municipal governments also go through a long process like this one when they create laws.

The period of time between a bill's first reading and final approval is important for ordinary Canadians. Since we don't get to vote on bills or debate them in the House of Commons, we have to give our input in other ways. Some people call or write to the MP (or MLA, or city councillor) who represents their neighbourhood. Others might try to get a letter about the bill published in the local paper. Some people organize protests if they don't agree with a new bill. Some people keep track of how their MP, MLA or city councillor voted on a certain bill, so they know whether or not to vote for that person the next time an election rolls around.

## Literacy Tip: Finding the Main Idea

Every story has a main idea. When we say, “What's the main idea?” we just mean, “What's this story about?” Some main idea statements are too broad. They don't tell us enough about the story. Others are too narrow. They only tell us about one part of the story, but not the whole thing.

Look back at the couple of pages you just read in Lesson #5. Then read the main idea statements below.

- A. Lesson #5 is about government.
- B. Lesson #5 is about how ordinary citizens can try to have an effect on the laws that are passed in Canada.
- C. Lesson #5 is about the different steps that are involved in passing a law in Canada.

Statement A is too broad. Sure this lesson talks about government, but we need to be more specific. There are many things we could write about government. We could write about what exactly a government is, like we did in Lesson #3, or the different types of government, like we did in Lesson #4. We could write about electing a government or things that we like or dislike about the current government. “This lesson is about government” doesn't give us enough information.

Statement B is too narrow. It's true that in the last paragraph we read about how Canadians can try to make their voices heard about new laws that are being passed, but that was only one small paragraph out of many. There are other things that are talked about during the lesson.

Statement C is the correct main idea statement. It includes everything in the lesson. Even the last paragraph on how citizens can participate is still part of “steps that are involved in passing a law”.

When you are asked, “What is the main idea?”, picture yourself reading a story or a news article, and a friend comes up and asks, “What's that about?” Try to think of a way you can tell him about the whole story in just a sentence or two. That is a good main idea statement.

# Payments to victims of crime to tighten

Larry Kusch for the Winnipeg Free Press  
Published on November 23, 2010

MANITOBA will make it more difficult for those with criminal records to receive compensation paid to victims of crime, while ensuring that witnesses to serious offences are offered counselling.

The proposed legislative changes to the provincial Victims' Bill of Rights were introduced in the legislature Monday by Justice Minister Andrew Swan.

Swan said it's "not infrequent" that people with criminal records apply for assistance from the province's victim services program. People injured as a result of a crime and immediate family members of a person who was killed as a result of a crime may be entitled to compensation.

The amendments introduced Monday would allow the program to deny compensation to a person who was convicted in the last 10 years of certain serious offences under the Criminal Code or the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Swan said the government wants to ensure that compensation and services go to victims who deserve them. He said the government wants to give gang members and other criminals another reason to avoid illegal activity.

The regulations would also allow the Compensation of Victims of Crime Program to reduce or deny compensations to applicants who have convictions for less serious but more frequent offences.

The government will also clarify the rules governing the provision of counselling for witnesses of crime. "Witnesses may need counselling because of what they've seen, and we just want to make sure that those services are there for those people," Swan said.

*Reprinted with permission from the Winnipeg Free Press.*

## Exercise #5

Read the article on the previous page and answer the questions below in complete sentences.

What is the main idea of the article? Can you explain what it's about in just a sentence or two?

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The bill in the article was introduced by the provincial government in November of 2010 and passed into law the following month. Based on what you read in Lesson #5 about passing bills into laws, can you take a guess at what steps Justice Minister Andrew Swan would have needed to take in order for this bill to become a law?

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## Lesson #6

# The History of the Vote

Voting is one way to influence who represents you in government. The 338 Members of Parliament in Canada, the 57 Members of the Legislative Assembly in Manitoba, and the mayor and 15 councillors at Winnipeg's City Hall are all elected by the citizens they represent.

Voting is a right guaranteed to all Canadian citizens, as long as they are 18 years or older and have been living in Canada for at least six months (or, in the case of provincial or municipal elections, they have been living in their home province or city for at least six months). It wasn't always this way, though. While wealthy white men have always had the privilege of voting, women, aboriginal people, and inmates have had to struggle for their right to vote.

Take the test below about the history of voting in Manitoba, then turn the page for some facts about voting that might surprise you.

Imagine the year is 1950 and there is an election coming up. Can you vote if you:

1. Don't own any property? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Want your vote to be kept secret? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are staying in a hospital? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are going to be out of town on voting day? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are a woman? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are Aboriginal? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are 20 years old? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Are in prison? \_\_\_\_\_

Read below to find the answers.

You could vote in 1950 if you didn't own any property, but back in 1870 you couldn't. When voting began in Manitoba in 1870 you had to be male and own property in order to be eligible. The voting process was a large meeting where you had to stand up and state who you were going to vote for. Today voting is done by a secret ballot, which began in 1888. So you could vote in 1950 and have your vote be kept anonymous.

If you were a patient in a hospital in 1950, you could not cast a vote in an election. Hospital patients were not allowed to vote until 1962. Patients in psychiatric institutions (called mental hospitals back then) did not get the right to vote until 1988.

You could vote in 1950, even if you would be out of town on voting day. In 1932 advance polls were made available to anyone who wanted to vote but who would be away on Election Day.

You could vote in 1950 if you were a woman, thanks to brave activists such as Manitoban Nellie McClung. Manitoba became the first province in Canada to allow women to vote in provincial elections, in 1916. Soon, all over Canada other provinces followed their example, but some were slower than others. Quebec didn't allow women to vote until 1940. Since the federal government allowed women to vote in 1918, women in Quebec were voting in federal elections for over twenty years before they were finally allowed to vote in provincial ones! Our country has some things to be ashamed of in its past.

And speaking of that, you could not necessarily vote in 1950 if you were an Aboriginal person. In 1932 Aboriginal Canadians were given the right to vote – but only if they joined the army. In 1952 the law was changed so that all Treaty Indians could vote, but

there are Aboriginal people who are not treaty. Finally, in 1960 all Aboriginal people were allowed to participate in elections.

You could not vote in the year 1950 if you were 20 years old. Back then, the voting age was 21. It wasn't until 1969 that the voting age was lowered to 18.

Finally, you definitely could not vote in the year 1950 if you were serving time in a jail or prison. Inmates in Manitoba didn't win the right to vote in provincial elections until 1988. They didn't win the right to vote in federal elections until 1993, and even then it was only those serving provincial time (2 years or less) who were allowed to vote. Finally, in 2002, the Supreme Court of Canada granted all inmates the right to vote in federal elections.

For over a hundred years there were laws that prevented certain groups of people from voting, and many people worked hard to change them. Remember that just because something might be part of the law, doesn't mean it's right. Remember also that ordinary Canadians have been able to change harmful laws throughout history.

## Literacy Tip: Quotation Marks

Earlier we talked about end punctuation – punctuation marks used at the end of sentences. Another important punctuation mark is the quotation mark ( “ ” ). Quotation marks come in pairs and are used to show that someone is speaking. You're probably already fairly familiar with these if you read books, magazines, or newspaper articles. Look back at the news story in Exercise #5, for example. Whenever the justice minister's exact words are used in the story, you'll see quotation marks.

End punctuation changes a bit when we use quotation marks. Where statements usually end with a period, we end them with a comma when we're using quotation marks, so that we can add the words “he said” or “she said” to complete the sentence.

For example:

Don't forget to mail that letter for me.

...becomes...

“Don't forget to mail that letter for me,” Troy's roommate said.

If we can already tell who is speaking and don't need to write “he said,” we can continue to use a period to end a sentence in quotation marks.

For example:

Troy rushed toward the door and searched frantically for his gloves in the closet.

“Don't forget to mail that letter for me,” his roommate said.

“I'm already late for work. You're going to have to do it yourself for a change.”

Here's the confusing part. While a period inside quotation marks changes into a comma, exclamation marks (!) and question marks (?) inside quotation marks stay the same.

For example:

“How was your hockey game?” Paul's mom asked him.

“We totally destroyed them!” Paul said, beaming with pride.

## Exercise #6

Go through the story below and add quotation marks and end punctuation where it is needed.

On October 31, 2001, the Supreme Court ruled that all Canadian inmates would be granted the right to vote. It was a happy day for Rick Sauve, who had been fighting for his right to vote for 18 years. In the early 1990s, Sauve challenged the voting laws through the courts while he was serving a life sentence for murder in an Ontario prison.

A group of inmates in the Native Brotherhood in Stony Mountain joined in the challenge. So did the John Howard Society and the BC Civil Liberties Association.

Mr. Sauve, were you happy with the result of this? a CBC reporter asked Sauve just after the ruling.

I was thrilled, Sauve said. It's been a long fight, and I was really excited about it.

You have been fighting for this right for a long time. Why is it so important to you?

I had always exercised my vote before I ended up in prison, Sauve replied. My father was active in politics, and I had followed politics quite closely. When I found myself in prison and found that besides losing my freedom, I also couldn't vote, it bothered me a great deal. I read through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and I saw that every citizen has the right to vote. I hadn't lost my citizenship, so I contacted my lawyer and we started the process.

The reporter pointed out that some people feel inmates shouldn't have the right to vote,

because they give up some of their rights when they commit a crime

Well, your freedom is taken away Sauve explained. But you don't come to prison for punishment, the prison *is* the punishment The other fundamental rights, we maintain

Why the vote in particular the reporter asked him. Tell me a little bit more about what that means to you

Well, I never lost sight of what was taking place in the community Sauve said I have family in the community, so I cared about everything that was affecting my family in the community, be it education, be it health care, any number of things It wasn't just that I'd lost the right to vote, but I felt that my say in how the government was treating not only me but my family and the community as a whole, was taken away from me, as was my citizenship

After Rick Sauve got parole, he went on to work for an organization called Lifeline Inreach, helping federal prisoners to prepare for their release

## Lesson #7

### How to Vote: Getting Informed

It's good to know that all Canadians now have the right to vote, but that doesn't do you much good if you don't know who to vote for. Our students in the Remand Centre told us that many of them did not vote in elections because they did not know anything about the political parties, or even about the candidates who were running in their area.

“Even though people understand it's important to vote, you don't want to be the one just putting an X beside a name,” one student explained. “You want to know who you're voting for.”

An important place to start is finding out what electoral district or division you will be voting in. “Electoral district” or “electoral division” are just words for what neighbourhood or part of the province you are from. These neighbourhoods are also called “ridings” or “constituencies”. If you are incarcerated you may vote for candidates in your home riding, or for candidates who are running in the riding the jail or prison is located in. There are numbers you can call to figure out who your candidates are. For federal elections, contact 1-800-463-6868. For provincial elections, contact 945-3225 or 1-866-628-6837. For local elections, you can contact 311 if you live in Winnipeg. If you're from a rural community or a First Nations community, you can contact your town council or band council. However, you may not be able to vote in local elections while in jail.

Once you've figured out exactly who is competing for your vote, it's time to learn as much as you can about them. Even though there are different candidates in each riding, the political parties they represent are usually the same. Examples of political parties include the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, The New Democratic Party (NDP),

The Green Party, The First Peoples' National Party, the Communist Party, the Libertarian Party, the Christian Heritage Party, and others.

There are several ways to learn about the candidates and their parties. One way is by reading the paper or watching the news. In the weeks before an election, the parties will be making announcements about their campaign promises, and these are often covered by the news media. If you have Internet access, you can often find good information there by searching candidates' names to learn about their qualifications and experience.

If you're living in the community, you will probably receive flyers from candidates running for election. No matter where you're living, you will see and hear ads from some of the candidates talking about the good things they will do, and of course all of the horrible things the other parties will do. These are known as “attack ads,” and, as one of our students pointed out, they don't usually tell you much about the party.

“That kind of negative press isn't very helpful,” he said. “I try to see the good that the parties are doing and base my decision on that instead.”

The best way to learn about the parties and issues in an election is to do your own research. Contact the candidates' campaign offices to talk to them or their staff about the issues that are important to you. Many neighbourhoods hold debates, where the candidates from all parties will attend to make speeches, answer people's questions, and discuss the issues with one another. Prepare a question or two that you haven't seen answered in newspapers or campaign flyers.

Whoever gets the most votes in your riding will be representing you in government. Make sure you know where they stand on the things that matter to you. More importantly, make sure they know where you stand on the things that matter to you.

## Literacy Tip: Using the Dictionary

You might already be familiar with the dictionary, which is the go-to place for learning the meanings of difficult or unfamiliar words.

Words in the dictionary are listed in alphabetical order, meaning that those words that begin with “a” are listed first, followed by “b”, “c”, and so on. When putting words in alphabetical order, we look first at the beginning letter of a word, then at the second letter, then the third. We know right away that “anger” comes before “gesture” in the dictionary, because “a” comes before “g”. But what about the words “candy,” “catapult,” “cricket,” “crass,” “cantaloupe,” and “correction”?

If we look at the second letter in each word, we see that “candy,” “catapult,” and “cantaloupe” will be earlier in the order than “cricket,” “crass,” or “correction.” If we go to the third letter, we see that “catapult” must come later, because “n” comes before “t”. Between “candy” and “cantaloupe” we must go to the fourth letter, which in “candy” is “d” and in “cantaloupe” is “t”. So the words would be listed: “candy,” “cantaloupe,” “catapult,” “correction,” “crass” and “cricket.”

A dictionary definition tells us what the word means and sometimes uses it in a sentence. It also tells us what type of word it is: a noun (a person, place or thing), a verb (an action word), or an adjective (a word that describes something), for example.

A dictionary will come in handy as you research candidates running for election, but even then you might not get a clear picture of whether the candidate would be a good politician. Political flyers and speeches are filled with words like “accountability,” “transparency,” and “responsibility.” It's not enough to know what they mean. Anyone can say they are “accountable” or “responsible.” It doesn't mean they actually are. Make the candidate give you specific examples of their accountability. Don't be afraid to ask hard questions!

As a teenager, one of our JHS literacy students had the opportunity to meet the prime minister and lieutenant governor as part of a youth group he was involved in. He and other members of the group bombarded the politicians with tough questions about taxes, government spending, and the environment until they said, “Yikes! You kids are worse than the media!”

“Our questions were more straightforward than the questions they got from the media,” the student recalled, “because it was our future we were putting in their hands.”

# Vision. Accountability. Leadership.



## A vote for Ron Politico is a vote for a new Winnipeg

My name is Ron Politico and I want to be your city councillor. I have lived in Winnipeg for 35 years, and have been active in a variety of different community groups and projects. I love Winnipeg and am committed to making this city the best that it can be! A vote for me is a vote for:

- Exciting new initiatives to revitalize our city
- A commitment to sustainability and responsible spending
- Incentives to make our beautiful city more business-friendly
- Action on crime and public safety
- Improvements to our public transportation system
- Prioritizing the needs of students, seniors and families

**On Election Day, vote Ron Politico!**

## Exercise #7

On the previous page there is an example of a flyer for someone who is running for city councillor in the next municipal election. Pretend you've received this flyer in the mail.

Are there any words on this flyer you're not familiar with? List them below, and use a dictionary to look them up.

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Next, write down some questions you would ask Ron Politico in order to get a better sense of who he is and whether he would be a good councillor. Try to think of at least two or three questions.

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## Lesson #8

### How to Vote: On Election Day

Even if you are incarcerated, you have the right to vote in elections. Voting in jail usually takes place about ten days in advance of Election Day for federal elections, and on Election Day for provincial ones.

If you want to vote in an upcoming election, you may need to request to vote in advance and get registered to vote. Usually, this is done by filling out a request form or asking a staff member to fill one out for you. You'll know an election is coming because there will be posters all over the institution advertising it. (You also won't be able to pick up a newspaper or turn on the TV without some mention of the election!).

A lot of inmate voters get confused about elections, and we don't blame them. There are many different types of elections and it's hard to keep them all straight. There are federal elections, where all Canadians can vote. Then there are provincial elections, where only Manitobans can vote. In municipal elections only residents of Winnipeg can vote. In band council elections only members of that particular First Nation can vote. In by-elections – which happen when a politician quits and gives up his or her seat outside of normal election-time – only the people who live in his or her electoral district can vote. It's easy to get overwhelmed, so if you're not sure, ask. Each jail or prison has a staff member in charge of elections, and they can answer any questions you have.

Many inmate voters also aren't sure what electoral district they are supposed to vote in. As we heard earlier, our country, province, and city are divided up into voting neighbourhoods called electoral districts, and each electoral district elects one representative. Incarcerated voters sometimes wonder: do I vote in the electoral district where I am incarcerated, or in the one where I last lived? What if I have no fixed

address? What if I have an address on the outside but for legal reasons I am not allowed to return to it?

Most of the time, you'll vote in the electoral district where you last lived. Sometimes it's more complicated than that, but don't worry: the workers at the elections agencies who come to the institution to help you vote will be able to figure this out for you.

If you're living the community at the time of an election, you will probably receive a voter information card in the mail a few weeks before the election. If the information is correct, you're registered to vote. If it's not, call the number listed to update your information. If you don't receive a card, you should call to make sure you are registered. If it's a federal election, call Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868. If it's a provincial election, call Elections Manitoba at 1-866-628-6837. If it's a city election, call the City of Winnipeg at 311.

The card will list your polling station, which is a building in your neighbourhood that is temporarily used for the election. On voting day, bring a piece of ID that has your photo and address, or two pieces of ID that have your name and address. If you don't have ID, you can still vote. You can get someone who does have ID and who knows you to vouch for you; they'll come to the polls with you and swear an oath that you are who you say you are.

You are still able to vote even if you have no fixed address, even if you can't leave your home due to illness, and even if you need a ride to get to the polling station. Elections agencies like Elections Canada and Elections Manitoba were designed to organize elections and to make it easier for people to vote. It is their job to help you. Don't be shy about contacting them with all of your questions about voting and elections, whether you're voting from jail or voting in the community.

## Literacy Tip: Alphabetical Order

In the tip on dictionary use, we talked a little bit about alphabetical order. Alphabetical order is a very common way to organize things. If you've ever browsed through a library or a CD store, you probably noticed that everything beginning with "A" is grouped together at the beginning and everything beginning with "Z" is grouped together at the end, with all the other letters falling in order between.

Learning about alphabetical order will help you in organizing files in an office, looking up a word in the dictionary, or finding a name in the phone book.

In alphabetical order, we look at the first letter of a word and compare it to the first letter of other words. For example, "dragon" comes before "sandwich" in alphabetical order because the letter "d" comes before the letter "s". "Hurt" comes before "jump", "cold" comes before "route", and "swordfish" comes before "torch".

It gets a little more difficult when the first letter of two words is the same. At that point, we move on to the second letters, and compare them.

"Fire" and "farm" both begin with "f", so if we want to put them in order we need to look at the second letter. "A" comes before "i", so "farm" would come before "fire" in alphabetical order. "Crib" and "crab" both begin with "cr", so we'd move on to the third letter to decide which comes first. "Crab" would come before "crib", because "a" comes before "i".

## Exercise #8

When you vote in the community, the best option for voter ID is to bring a driver's license, or another type of ID with your name, address and picture. If you don't have a picture ID with an address, you can bring two other types of ID or document. Both need to have your name and one needs to have your address. Below is a list of documents you can use, found on the Elections Canada website. In the right hand column, put the names of the ID or documents into alphabetical order. Put a check mark beside documents or types of ID that you have or that you would have if you were living in the community.

Accepted ID and documents for voting	Documents in alphabetical order
health card	
Canadian passport	
citizenship card	
birth certificate	
certificate of Indian status (status card)	
social insurance number card	
old age security card	
student ID card	
liquor commission identification card	
credit or debit card	
library card	
Canadian Forces identity card	
Canadian Blood Services card	
firearm possession license	
fishing, trapping, or hunting license	
parolee identification card	
utility bill (hydro, gas, TV, telephone, etc.)	
bank statement	
vehicle insurance	
letter from a school or university	
statement of benefits (EI, social assistance, etc)	
residential lease or mortgage statement	
attestation of residence from a First Nations band or reserve	

## Lesson #9

### Why Don't More People Vote?

We've learned that all Canadians have the right to vote in elections, but it turns out that many Canadians don't exercise this right. In the most recent federal election in May of 2011, only about 61% of Canadians of legal voting age actually voted. In 2011's provincial election, about 57.5% of Manitobans voted. In the 2010 civic election, only about 49% of Winnipeggers cast a vote.

There are many reasons why people don't vote. They may not have enough information about elections, as in the case of one of our students who said he has never voted before.

“I've always wanted to vote, but I didn't know too much about it,” he said. “I didn't know where to go or how to vote.”

Some voters may not even realize they are allowed to vote. One of our students from Remand Centre recalled that he'd been in jail during one election and didn't realize he could still participate.

“I saw the posters up, but I live in a rural area, so I didn't think my address would have been affected,” he said.

Some people feel they don't have enough information about the candidates to make a good choice. Others feel they know enough to know there aren't any good choices.

“All of the available political parties are just variations of the same thing,” said a student who used to vote but no longer does. “Politicians look after the profits of the elite rather than the needs of the public. I don't vote because a vote really has no influence.”

Another stated, “The type of people who usually run in elections are living high and mighty, and they've never lived where the rest of us have. Don't come into our area and tell us what we need. You have to live in our area before you can know what we need.”

Still another student stated that most politicians don't concern themselves with the things that matter to him. “To me it's like, 'What did you ever do for me?’” he said. “If they had some kind of help for me, like help with schooling, then maybe I would vote for them. But as far as I'm concerned, there's nothing there for me.”

Some people are frustrated with Canada's system of voting and government, and don't trust politicians.

“It's all just corruption as far as I can see,” said one student who had never voted. “There's no point in getting involved in it.”

All of these students have good points to make. Those who need more information about elections or about candidates before they can vote will hopefully have found some of that in this book.

For those who are fed up with politicians or the voting system in general, there are still a few options. You can try to get the candidates competing for your vote to care more about the issues you think are important. You can also try to make a difference in other ways that don't have to do with voting. Later in this book, we'll talk about social activism and how there can be much more to politics than going to the polls every few years.

## Literacy Tip: Capital Letters

Capital letters are also sometimes called “upper-case letters”.

You've probably already been using capital letters at the beginning of each new sentence you write, as well as for people's names. Make sure you're also using capitals every time you use any other kind of name as well, whether it's the name of a store, the name of a movie, a city, a country, a river, a holiday, or a day of the week or name of a month.

The chart below gives a few examples.

No capital needed	Capital letter needed
month	February
province	Alberta
school	Sister MacNamara School
favourite band	Metallica
my sister	my sister, Hannah
a doctor	Doctor Nick
city	Montreal
lake	Lake Huron

Also keep in mind that the word “I” needs to be capitalized, as though it is a name. This is the case whether it appears at the beginning of a sentence or somewhere in the middle.

For example:

**I** couldn't wait to be done work for the day so **I** could take my motorcycle out for a spin.

My friend Kevin has always been like a brother to me, and **I** am lucky to know him.

## Exercise #9

The story below is a fable written by Tommy Douglas, a politician who became famous for introducing free universal health care to Canada after he became premier of Saskatchewan in 1944. Read the story carefully and circle the letters that should be capitalized. Remember to look for names and sentence-beginnings.

### The Story of Mouseland

this is the story of a place called mouseland. mouseland was a place where all the little mice lived and played, were born and died. they lived much the same as you and I do.

they even had a parliament. And every four years mouseland had an election. the mice would walk to the polls and cast their ballots. some of them even got a ride to the polls. every time on election day all the little mice used to go to the ballot box and they used to elect a government. a government made up of big, fat, black cats.

now I'm not saying anything against the cats. they were nice fellows. they conducted their government with dignity. they passed good laws--that is, laws that were good for cats. but the laws that were good for cats weren't very good for mice. one of the laws said that mouseholes had to be big enough so a cat could get his paw in. another law said that mice could only travel at certain speeds--so that a cat could get his breakfast without too much effort.

all the laws were good laws. for cats. but, oh, they were hard on the mice. and life was getting harder and harder in mouseland. when the mice couldn't put up with it any more, they decided something had to be done about it. so they went to the polls and they voted the black cats out. they put in the white cats.

the white cats had put up a terrific campaign. they said: "All that mouseland needs is more vision." They said: "The trouble with mouseland is those round mouseholes we got. if you put us in we'll establish square mouseholes." and they did. and the square mouseholes were twice as big as the round mouseholes, and now the cat could get both his paws in. and life was tougher than ever.

and when they couldn't take that anymore, they voted the white cats out and put the black ones in again. then they went back to the white cats. then to the black cats. they even got one government made up of cats with spots on them: they were cats that tried to make a noise like a mouse but ate like a cat.

you see, my friends, the trouble wasn't with the colour of the cat. the trouble was that they were cats. and because they were cats, they naturally looked after cats instead of

mice.

one day there came along one little mouse who had an idea. my friends, watch out for the little fellow with an idea. and he said to the other mice, "look fellows, why do we keep on electing a government made up of cats? why don't we elect a government made up of mice?"

"uh oh," they said, "he's a socialist! lock him up!" then they put him in jail.

but I want to remind you: that you can lock up a mouse or a man but you can't lock up an idea.

*Story adapted from <http://blog.uncommonwisdomdaily.com/a-tale-for-our-times-the-story-of-mouseland-5920>*

What do you think Tommy Douglas is trying to say with this story? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

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What would “a government made up of mice” look like to you? What values would that government have? What issues would be important to the people who ran it?

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## Lesson #10

### Is Our Electoral System Fair?

Imagine the company you work for is throwing a huge Christmas party, and your bosses are trying to decide what food to serve. They decide to take a poll of all the workers to see what type of food is most popular. There are 50 workers altogether, and out of those 50, 15 people vote for pizza, 15 vote for burgers, and 20 vote for Chinese food. Since Chinese food got the most votes, maybe it makes the most sense to serve that. But wait – didn't most of the people who voted (30 altogether) want something other than Chinese food? Should Chinese food be the only food that is served, even if most people didn't want it? Is there a more fair way to do things?

Some people argue that Canada's system of elections is unfair in much the same way as this example. The way Canadian elections work is sometimes called “winner-takes-all” or “first-past-the-post”. This means that the candidate with the most votes gets to represent their electoral district as a Member of Parliament (MP) or Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), while the runners-up don't get anything.

If you live in an electoral district with 70,000 people, and 15,000 voted for the Liberal party, while 10,000 voted for the NDP, 8,000 for the Conservatives and 1,500 for the Greens, then a Liberal candidate will represent you in Parliament, even though only 15,000 voted for the Liberals and 19,500 people voted for someone else. If you add the 35,500 people who didn't vote at all, it turns out only 15,000 people voted for the Liberals, while 55,000 did not. Some people would say that it doesn't make sense for the Liberal candidate to be the MP for the area, since most of the people living there did not actually vote for him or her.

On a larger scale, if you had 300 electoral districts with these types of voting numbers,

you could have a whole House of Commons full of Liberal MPs, even though most voters in the country did not vote for the Liberal Party. For that reason, some say that our voting system is not fair, and that it causes many people to feel that their votes don't count anyway, especially if they vote for smaller parties.

Canada is one of just a few major nations that uses the first-past-the-post system. Some other countries have developed voting systems to try to make the politicians sitting in their house of government match up more closely with the number of people who voted for them. The Party List System, for example, is the most widely-used voting system in the world. Rather than dividing the country into smaller electoral divisions or constituencies, the whole country is treated as one single electoral division. Each party has a list of candidates, and voters choose among them. The number of candidates from each party elected to government depends on the percentage of the vote received. So if 20% of voters chose candidates from Party A, then that party would fill 20% of the positions in the house of government. About 70 countries in the world use this type of system, including Sweden, Greece, Switzerland, Spain, Denmark, Norway, and many more.

In Mixed Member Proportional Systems, voters actually cast two votes: one for the party they support, and one for the candidate they prefer in their local area. The candidate votes choose which candidates are elected, but the party votes ensure that the number of people elected from each party match up with the percentage that voted for that party. Germany developed this system, and New Zealand also uses it.

In Single Transferable Vote systems, voters can rank candidates in order of their first, second, third and fourth choice, and so on. Once a candidate gets enough “first place” votes to get elected, the “extra” first place votes go toward electing those voters' second place candidates. This system is used in Ireland, Malta, and in the Australian senate.

Some people think Canada should switch to one of these systems, so that the number of politicians in Parliament more closely reflects the number of people who voted for each party. Others prefer our first-past-the-post system, because it is fairly easy to understand compared to some of the other systems and is the cheapest way to run elections. It is also more likely to produce majority governments: governments where one party has more than half the seats in parliament and can pass laws more quickly and more easily because there are not enough members of opposition parties to vote against them.

Whichever camp you fall in, it's important to remember that every time a country has a way of doing something, there are almost always other ways of doing it. Sometimes we can look to other countries for ideas about how we can do something better (or to see that we are already doing something well). If there is an issue you care a lot about, do your research! Look at how other countries are dealing with this issue. You may be surprised at how much you can learn.

## Literacy Tip: Calculating a Percentage

You might be thinking, “What? What does math have to do with literacy?” Math is actually a very important part of how people make sense of what they read. Take a look through a newspaper and count how many times you see numbers: amounts of money, percentages, statistics, and numbers of people. Having a good understanding of math will help you to be a better reader.

In the exercise for Lesson #11 you'll be finding a percentage. If you already know how to do this, go ahead to the exercise. If you need a refresher, read on:

Let's say you took a test with 60 questions on it, and you got 41 correct. How do you know how you did? You probably already know that getting 60/60 would be 100%, but what percentage is 41/60?

Did you pass the test? You might be able to tell this by just looking at the relationship between 41 and 60. Is 41 over half of 60? It is. We can see that 30 out of 60 would be half, or 50%. If we divided 60 up into quarters we could probably tell what 25% would be (15/60) and what 75% would be (45/60). So, without a calculator, you can still sort of tell how you did. You got more than 50%, but less than 75%. Being able to estimate percentages like this is an important skill, since you won't have a calculator with you every time you have to figure something like this out.

If you do have a calculator, figuring out your percent is as easy as dividing 41 by 60. The answer is 0.68333333. This is your mark expressed as a decimal. If you want to express it as a percent, simply multiply it by 100, or move the zero over two decimal places to the right. Your answer is 68.33%, or, to round it off, 68%.

You can do it with much larger numbers too. Let's say 14,500 people went to a hockey game, and 11,330 bought food or a drink while they were there. What percentage of people who attended bought food or a drink?

You would take 11,330 and use your calculator to divide by 14,500. Then multiply your answer by 100 (or move the decimal two spots to the right). The answer is 78.12% or, in other words, good money for whoever is running the food stands and the bar at this hockey game!

## Exercise #10

In this exercise you'll do some math to learn more about how Canada elects its politicians. You'll need a calculator for this one. The charts below show the voting results from four Winnipeg neighbourhoods in the 2011 federal election.

	Winnipeg South	Charleswood – St. James - Assiniboia	Winnipeg South Centre	Elmwood-Transcona
Candidate for Party A	22840	23264	15468	15298
Candidate for Party B	5693	8140	7948	1660
Candidate for Party C	14296	7437	14772	14998
Candidate for Party D	889	1587	1384	1017
Total votes	43718	40428	39572	32973

How many votes did candidates for Party A get in these four constituencies? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of all the votes did Party A get? \_\_\_\_\_

(Hint: You'll need to calculate the total number of votes for all parties in all four constituencies, as well as the total number of votes for Party A for all four constituencies)

How many votes did candidates for Party B get in these four constituencies? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of all the votes did Party B get? \_\_\_\_\_

What about Party C? How many votes did they receive altogether? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of all the votes was that? \_\_\_\_\_

Out of these four constituencies, how many Party A candidates were elected to sit in Canada's Parliament? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of these four available seats is that? \_\_\_\_\_

Out of these four constituencies, how many candidates from other parties were elected to sit in Canada's Parliament? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of these four available seats is that? \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson #11

### Grassroots Activism

“If you don't vote, you'd better not complain!”

Have you ever heard somebody say this before? Do you agree or disagree?

One activist we interviewed disagrees very strongly. “There's an argument that if you don't vote, you don't count because it shows you don't care,” she says. “But we need to look at other reasons why somebody might not be voting. They might care very much, but they just feel left out of the system.”

If you don't vote, it doesn't mean you give up your right to talk about politics and to care about the world around you. There are many other places you can make changes in the world other than at the ballot box.

Better rights for women, workers, prisoners, people of colour, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people were not won through elections. They were won when concerned Canadians marched in the streets, educated their neighbours, broke unjust laws, challenged them in court, and went on strike in huge numbers. These are all examples of what is called “grassroots activism”. The term “grassroots” means that social change happens from the bottom up, beginning with regular everyday people, rather than happening from the top down at the hands of politicians and governments.

Grassroots activism can be something small, like a group of students trying to get their school to buy locally produced goods rather than importing cheaper goods made in sweatshops halfway around the world. Or it could be something huge, like the thousands of protestors in Egypt and Tunisia who assembled in their city streets in the spring of

2011 and refused to work or to go home until the dictators that ruled them stepped down.

Indigenous groups have staged blockades of roads and railways to protest the government's use of their land. Gay rights groups have held parades to celebrate their sexuality and demand an end to discrimination. Workers have organized into co-ops and collectives to make sure they earn better wages and are more able to have a say in important decisions. Prisoners also have a long history of grassroots activism, as we learned earlier when we read about Rick Sauve, and we'll discuss this more later in the book.

As you can see, there are hundreds of ways to make a difference in your community. If you don't vote, there are still many other things you can do if you have a cause you are passionate about. If you do vote, there's no reason you can't be involved in activism and local community groups as well!

In the next few chapters we'll learn more about some of the activist groups that are active in the city of Winnipeg.

## Literacy Tip: Paragraphs

Paragraphs are a way of organizing writing to make it easier to read and understand. When there is a lot of writing on a page, it can be difficult to read if it just appears in one giant chunk. Try reading the passage below:

Peace Alliance Winnipeg is an activist group committed to developing a broad movement for peace in our city. It organizes actions and educational events to bring attention to the war and violence that is taking place around the world, and what we can do about it. Through our website we try to educate people about this important topic. We give information about war and peace, and especially the way that Canada is contributing to violence. For example, we tell people about Canada's role in the occupation of Afghanistan, or more recently, the bombing of Libya. We also hold public events to raise awareness about these issues, to bring people together to talk about solutions, and to pressure politicians to make better decisions about how we use our military. For example, we have a Walk for Peace every June to protest the violence Canada is involved in. We have a Lanterns for Peace ceremony each August to remember the nuclear bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945, where about 200,000 people were killed. We make Buddhist lanterns and peace cranes to honour the memory of those who have died and to demand that countries dismantle their nuclear weapons so this never happens again. If you would like to learn more about Peace Alliance, you can find us online at <http://www.peacealliancewinnipeg.ca> or by calling 586-6057. We are also on Facebook. Becoming a member costs \$1 per month and as much time and energy as you can spare. We need your ideas, creativity and passion to make this world a more peaceful place.

This is hard to read, isn't it? It is easier on the eyes to break this large block of text into smaller sections, called paragraphs. You start a new paragraph by moving to the next line and leaving an extra space between the edge of the page and the first word of the paragraph. Or just leave extra space between paragraphs.

How do you know when to start a new paragraph? Watch for a change in topic. The large piece of writing above is all about a local group called Peace Alliance, but there are smaller topic changes throughout. First, the author tells you what Peace Alliance is. Then, they talk about Peace Alliance's website. Next, they discuss the public events the group holds in the community. Finally, they talk about how you can get involved. Each of these should be its own smaller paragraph.

Here is an example of how the large block of text on the last page could be divided up into paragraphs:

Peace Alliance Winnipeg is an activist group committed to developing a broad movement for peace in our city. It organizes actions and educational events to bring attention to the war and violence that is taking place around the world, and what we can do about it.

Through our website we try to educate people about this important topic. We give information about war and peace, and especially the way that Canada is contributing to violence. For example, we tell people about Canada's role in the occupation of Afghanistan, or more recently, the bombing of Libya.

We also hold public events to raise awareness about these issues, to bring people together to talk about solutions, and to pressure politicians to make better decisions about how we use our military. For example, we have a Walk for Peace every June to protest the violence Canada is involved in. We have a Lanterns for Peace ceremony each August to remember the nuclear bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945, where about 200,000 people were killed. We make Buddhist lanterns and peace cranes to honour the memory of those who have died and to demand that countries dismantle their nuclear weapons so this never happens again.

If you would like to learn more about Peace Alliance, you can find us online at <http://www.peacealliancewinnipeg.ca> or by calling 204-586-6057. We are also on Facebook. Becoming a member costs \$1 per month and as much time and energy as you can spare. We need your ideas, creativity and passion to make this world a more peaceful place.

## Exercise #11

Read the text below, which is about another local group working on an issue that is important to them. Circle the places where you think a new paragraph should begin.

The South Osborne Urban Community Cooperative is a non-profit group concerned about where our food comes from and what effect our eating habits have on the environment and on the people who work to produce our food. We want to change how people think about food and make it easier for them to buy local food and to grow their own food. One way we help people to find local food is by running a local food-buying club. We make it easier for people living in the city to order meat, grains, vegetables and honey from small farms near Winnipeg. This way people can buy food from their neighbours. It is better for the environment than buying food that is shipped from halfway around the world, and it helps to keep small, local farms in business. We also try to help people grow their own food, which is a cheap and healthy way to eat. We help our neighbours to build community gardens, and we have a garden share program. In this program we connect people who have a garden, but don't use it, with people who don't have a garden, but who would like to. Finally, we help to educate people about why it is better for the earth and the people in it to eat food that is grown locally. We do this by having information nights where we watch documentaries about food production or give presentations about our programs. Many people don't think about how their food choices affect others and the environment, and we'd like to change that! You can find more information about South Osborne Urban Community Cooperative on our website at <http://www.southosborneucc.ca/> or by emailing us at [urban.community.cooperative@gmail.com](mailto:urban.community.cooperative@gmail.com).

## Lesson #12

# Sisters in Spirit: Spreading the Word about Canada's Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women

There are many problems in our society that need attention, and nobody has the time to try to fix them all, or all by themselves. That's why activists and community organizers often form themselves into groups that deal with just one or two of these problems, and work together to find solutions. In Exercise #11, you read about Peace Alliance, a group that deals with the issue of war. You also learned about South Osborne Urban Community cooperative, who deal with issues of food production and how what we eat affects us, our neighbours, and the environment.

One issue that Winnipeg activists are very concerned about is the issue of violence against women – especially Aboriginal women. You might be surprised to learn that nearly 600 Aboriginal women have been murdered or have gone missing in Canada in the last 30 years. Some people say that number is actually even higher.

Sisters in Spirit are a national group with local chapters. The Winnipeg chapter of Sisters in Spirit began in 2004 as a campaign by Anglican and United churches to raise awareness in the community and to honour the women who have been killed or who have gone missing.

Winnipeg Sisters in Spirit provides support to the families of missing and murdered women, and organizes a memorial walk every Mother's Day to bring these families' stories into the public eye.

“We chose Mother's Day because a lot of these women are mothers, and all of them have mothers,” explains Mary Lysecki, one of the chairpersons of Winnipeg Sisters in Spirit.

“We wanted first and foremost to honour the women we have lost, and to make it clear that they're not just victims. They are children, mothers, aunties, and nieces. Their families are longing for them, and their deaths have made a huge difference to the rest of their families. We want to keep people from being thought of just as statistics.”

“Another purpose is to give voice to the family,” adds co-chair and fellow Anglican priest Barbara Shoomski. “Having a reporter come and stick a mic in your face just doesn't do it. The family are still distraught; they're not sure what to say. So, when we do our annual walk, we look around to see which families haven't yet spoken out in public, and invite them to tell their stories.”

The Mother's Day walk brings up to 300 people, who carry signs that bear the names of missing and murdered women. It includes food, speeches from organizers and women's families, honour songs, prayers, dancing and mourning. The walk begins at the St. Regis Hotel, where 16-year-old Sunshine Wood went missing in February of 2004. It ends at the Odena Circle at the Forks.

“The assumption is that most of these women were prostitutes,” says Barbara. “But Sunshine Wood's story is like mine. She came to Winnipeg at 16 to educate herself. That's what she was here for, and that's what she was doing, and yet she's not portrayed that way. This upsets me because that could have been me. I could have been that 16-year-old.”

“There's this perception that these women contributed to their deaths or deserved their deaths because of what they did. We're speaking out against that thinking in our walk by saying, we honour these women. We honour them as people who had hopes and dreams for their future, who had parents who loved them and children who are missing them.”

Sisters in Spirit is a grassroots organization that has no sponsors or government funding. When they do make a little money through donations or the sale of their T-shirts, they often share it with other local organizations who are doing similar work. Other activists and families of missing or murdered women also hold annual events, such as an awareness-raising concert called No Stone Unturned, and a memorial march on Valentine's Day.

Clearly groups like Sisters in Spirit have accomplished a lot in their work. But joining a group is not the only way that you can find solutions to a problem or raise awareness about an issue you care about. Read on to learn about how one Winnipeg woman is helping Aboriginal women using art.



*Grandmother Moon is the symbol of the Sisters in Spirit campaign. According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, "Grandmother Moon is a powerful teaching about Aboriginal women's special connection to our Grandmothers who have passed into the Spirit world. Grandmother Moon provides us direction, strength, knowledge and wisdom in taking our sacred place in our families, communities and beyond. She teaches us about our sacred role as the life-givers and the heart of our nations — for without women our nations cannot go on."*

## Art as Activism: The REDress Project

Métis artist Jaime Black was at a Canadian Studies conference in Germany when she came up with the idea for the REDress project. Several experts had given presentations on Aboriginal history and culture, when one woman – the only Aboriginal presenter at the conference – stood up and said, “Did you know there are over 500 missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada?”

As a stunned silence fell over the room, Jaime suddenly had a brainwave. She pictured an art project that would fill the city of Winnipeg with red dresses, each one representing an Indigenous woman who had been killed or had gone missing.

“With dresses everywhere, people wouldn't be able to turn away from the issue,” Jaime says.

She chose red because it has so many meanings: blood, violence, passion and sexuality. She also chose it because of its special significance in Aboriginal culture, and because one Aboriginal woman once told her it was the only colour that spirits can see.

She began collecting dress donations from the community, and put on a huge art exhibit at the University of Winnipeg in the spring of 2011, where she hung 120 red dresses all over the school. She also hung dresses at art galleries and at the Manitoba Legislature. She eventually took her show on the road to Ottawa and Kamloops. She called the project “REDress”, because the word “redress” means “to make right a wrong.”

Jaime hopes that her project will help to “make right a wrong” by bringing attention to an important issue that most people don't think very much about. She says that art is a unique form of activism because it's a different way of getting people's attention.

“We're bombarded with so many problems and troubles and activist issues, we have to put up emotional barriers,” Jamie explains. “So often, if someone hands them a pamphlet about an issue, people will decide 'no' before they even let any of that information in.”

She continues: “But I find that when people encounter this exhibition they first have an emotional reaction to the dresses, before they are even able to decide they aren't interested. They think, 'Oh, this is beautiful', or 'Oh wow, this is ghostly.' I've seen it in people's faces. They feel as though something is there, and then they look, and there's nothing inside that dress. There's no one inside that dress. It's an emotional reminder of these women being gone. And once people emotionally connect, then they want to know more, and at that point I'm able to talk about the issue with them.”

There are so many things that contribute to the problem of violence against Aboriginal women in Canada, Jaime says. She thinks it's important for people to remember that even though many of us think of colonialism as a thing of the past, Canada still mistreats Aboriginal people:

“The reality is, Aboriginal people are still being displaced, being imprisoned, and living in poverty. There are reserves where people don't have clean drinking water. Everybody knows these things, but we turn a blind eye to it and pretend that our country is somehow over its colonial past.”

Jaime says that when women do go missing, their families have little support, and sometimes their

disappearances are not taken seriously by police.

“One family told me that when they called to report their daughter missing, the police said, 'We don't do family reunions,'” Jaime recalls. “Basically they're saying, 'Your daughter went out partying and we're not concerned.' A lot of families have to wait a certain amount of time before someone who has gone missing is considered a priority.”

The media also plays a role, she adds. Instead of showing missing and murdered women as mothers, as daughters, and best friends, the media describe them only as prostitutes or drug users. They are more likely to use a woman's former mug shot in a story than a photo of her kissing her baby.

“People see that and think, 'Oh, she's a prostitute, that's why she went missing,'” Jaime says. “But why is someone less human based on what they do? Why is someone less human, ever? The media can make these women seem less human than other women, and that's a problem because in order for violence to happen, the person doing that violence needs to think of the other person as less than human, or that they deserve the violence.”

Jaime's exhibit is about getting people to think about missing and murdered women in a different way, and to think about all the things that might be going wrong in a society where violence against Aboriginal women is so common. In addition to her artwork, she does workshops with schools and community groups. She has also produced a documentary film called *REDress Redress* with the help of Tina Keeper, a well-known Aboriginal actress, activist and politician.

She is proud of her project and the effect it has had on others.

“I didn't want to be an artist only for myself,” Jaime says. “Some people say that art is like holding up a mirror to society, and forcing it to look at what it is. I wanted to make art that would do that.”



Jaime's dresses at both an indoor gallery and outdoor exhibit.

## Literacy Tip: Parts of Speech

You could probably go your whole life without learning what a noun is and still be fine. But some people find that learning about the basic building blocks of a sentence – sometimes called “the parts of speech” – helps them to become better writers. We'll talk briefly about three parts of speech: nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

A noun is a word that names a person, place, or thing. This could be a person's name, like Jaime Black. It could be a title, like artist. It could be an object, like a dress, or it could be a thing you can't hold in your hand but that is still real, like passion, violence, or sexuality.

A verb is the “action” word of the sentence. It tells what the main person or thing (noun) in the sentence is being or doing. Here are a couple of examples from the story you just read:

Jaime Black collected dress donations from the community.

She chose red because it has so many meanings.

Jaime is a Métis woman from Winnipeg.

Finally, an adjective is a word that tells us something about a noun. Adjectives include colours, shapes, and words that describe how big something is, how light or dark it is, what it smells like, and more. Words that describe what kind of a person someone is are also adjectives. Examples from the story include a red dress, a stunned silence, and a special significance.

Parts of speech are not just about what a word is, but also how that word is used. For example, the very same word can be both a noun and a verb.

For example, let's look at the word jail. If we talk about jailing a person, then jail is acting as a verb, because it is an action. If we talk about being in a jail, then jail is acting as a noun, because it is a thing.

## Exercise #12

Now that you've learned about the parts of speech, go back and read through the story about the REDress Project again. In the spaces below, write down five nouns, five verbs, and five adjectives from the story.

Nouns:

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Verbs:

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Adjectives:

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In the story, Jaime Black states that she believes Canada has not left its dark past of colonialism and poor treatment of Indigenous people behind. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

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When talking about violence, Jaime says that the first step in committing a violent act is for the person doing the violence to see their victim as less than human. What do you think about this statement? If you agree, can you think of any examples? If you disagree, can you explain why?

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## Lesson #13

### Whose Law and What Order?: Winnipeg Copwatch

“Instead of seeing a broken system and depending on the government to change it, we're trying to change it ourselves,” says Alex, a member of a local group called Winnipeg Copwatch.

“We don't ask permission from anybody to do that, and you don't have to be an expert to do it either,” adds Rob, another member.

The broken system they are talking about is the justice system, especially the police service. Copwatch is a group that tries to bring attention to the problem of police brutality and police misconduct in Winnipeg, and to hold the police service accountable for its actions.

Copwatch volunteers patrol the city streets with cameras, videotaping the police as they interact with the public in order to stop police violence before it happens. They organize regular workshops for schools, community centres, non-profit agencies and youth groups. There, they give presentations telling people what their rights are when dealing with the police, and how to assert those rights. Copwatch also gives people advice on how they can start their own Copwatch groups and organize their own cop-watching patrols. They help organize a march each year to mark the International Day Against Police Brutality.

Copwatch members feel it's important for the wider community to realize that not everyone feels protected by the police, and some people are downright afraid of them. They say that people are treated differently by police and the justice system depending on the colour of their skin, the way they talk, their level of education, their gender and

sexual orientation, and how much money they have. The group believes we should be looking at ways to change how policing is done in Canada.

“In our society, police are seen as just part of the way things are, and the way things are is the only possible way it could be,” says Daniel, a Copwatch member. “We don't agree with that, and so we spend time discussing what the role of police is in our society and are there alternatives?”

Fellow member Donna agrees. “We talk about things like, what is a crime, and why is it a crime, and who decided that should be a crime? These are important questions.”

Copwatch is organized differently from many other groups. In Copwatch, there is no president or vice-president or group leader. All members have equal status and equal power in decision-making. The group does not vote on decisions and then go with what the majority has decided. Instead, they talk about an issue until they have reached a decision that every single member agrees with. This is called consensus-based decision-making, since the word “consensus” means “agreement.”

“When you make decisions by voting, whoever is not in the majority doesn't get their voice heard or their concerns addressed,” Alex says. “Our way of doing things can be slower and more difficult, and we may only end up agreeing on two out of the seven things that have been proposed. But at least we're doing those two things from a place where everybody is comfortable.”

“We're not just interested in how the police treat people,” Daniel adds, “we also care about how we treat each other.”

To get involved in Winnipeg Copwatch or for more information, contact 204-942-1588.

# Know Your Rights When Interacting With the Police

## From Winnipeg Copwatch

Police are supposed to respect your rights, but sometimes they don't.

Each situation is different. Use your common sense.

### **If police ask you questions, you can say:**

*Am I under arrest?*

*Am I being detained?*

*Am I free to go?*

You do not have to talk to the police or answer their questions.

You can ask for their name and badge number.

If you touch a police officer, they can charge you with assault.

### **If police want to search you, your bags or your car, you can say:**

*I do not consent to this search.*

To “consent” means to agree, so “I do not consent” means “I do not agree.”

### **If police want to search your home, you can say:**

*Do you have a warrant?*

*Let me see the warrant.*

Then read it carefully.

If the police do not have a warrant, you can say:

*I do not consent to you entering my home.*

### **If you are arrested you can say:**

*I have the right to remain silent. I want to talk to a lawyer.*

### **If you are arrested and police want to strip search you, you can say:**

*You can only strip search me in private.*

*I am [male/female]. Only [male/female] officers can search me.*

### **If you are arrested:**

Stay calm and quiet.

If they ask, give your name, address and birth date. If you are driving, show your license. Then **do not say anything** until you talk to a lawyer.

If you can't afford to pay a lawyer, call Legal Aid Manitoba at 1-800-672-1043

## Literacy Tip: Making a Good Argument

Who doesn't love to be able to win an argument? But making a good argument is about more than just who can talk the loudest or longest. Making a good argument is about clearly stating your position and having good reasons to back up your position.

Your position will be a statement about what you believe or about what you are arguing for or against. Examples of positions could include:

“The city needs to spend more money on sports and recreation opportunities for kids.”  
(In a letter to the city council or to the editor of the newspaper).

“I am demanding a full refund for the meal I purchased last weekend.”  
(In an email to the manager of a shoddy restaurant).

“Savannah will need to be excused from phys. ed class for the next three weeks.”  
(In a note to your daughter's gym teacher).

In all of these cases it is not enough to simply state what you believe or what you want. You need to give good reasons for your position. For example, you'll need to explain how investing money in rec centres will make a difference in the health and fitness of children, and how it could go a long way to keeping young people out of trouble. You may want to give specific examples of how the centres or programming we have now aren't good enough, and explain how this has affected you, your family, or people you know.

Jot your ideas down in point form before you begin to write your letter (or email, or essay, or article). “Point form” means just a few words to remind you of each idea – no need to use full sentences. As you write down ideas, try to think about how someone would argue *against* your position, so that you can address their arguments with your own. For example, someone might say that the city is short on funding these days and that we simply can't afford more rec centres when we need the money for law enforcement. You might choose to point out that when we spend money on recreation opportunities, we actually save money in the long run because fewer kids get into trouble with the law, and then less needs to be spent on police and prisons.

Remember to organize your letter into paragraphs. For each new point or topic you write about, start a new paragraph. If you need to, look back at the last lesson for a reminder in how to divide your work into paragraphs.

## Exercise #13

In the lesson, Donna from Copwatch said the group enjoys discussing questions like, “What is a crime? Should that be a crime? Who decided that was a crime?”

Are there any laws or rules that you don't agree with? For example, is there anything that is a crime you think shouldn't be one? Is there anything that isn't a crime that should be? Come up with a position statement like the ones shown in the Literacy Tip, and write it below:

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Next, think about what someone who disagrees with you would say. In point form, write a few of the possible arguments *against* your position.

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Now jot down, in point form, a few arguments for your position. Remember to consider the possible arguments against your position when you are making your points.

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## Lesson #14

### Prison Activists: Prisoners' Justice Day

Every year on August 10th, prisoners take a day to remember those who have died behind prison walls. Some stop working or go on hunger strike as a way to honour the dead or to bring attention to the conditions in jails and prisons that still need to be changed.

Prisoners' Justice Day began in 1974 with the death of an inmate in Millhaven Institution, a maximum security prison in Bath, Ontario. Edward Nalon was being punished for refusing to work, had served 30 days in solitary confinement and was being kept in segregation. On August 10, he slashed his wrists and bled to death. Eddie had called for help by pressing the panic button in his cell, and other prisoners pressed theirs, but they later learned these had been deactivated by the guards.

The year after Eddie's death, prisoners at Millhaven refused to eat or work, even though they knew it would mean being sentenced to solitary confinement. They also held a memorial service.

In 1976 another prisoner, Robert Landers, died on that same unit. He was in segregation for trying to organize a prisoners' strike, and like Eddie his cries for help were not heard because the call buttons in the cells hadn't been repaired. Robert died of a heart attack, apparently with a nurse standing not far away. He wasn't found until the next morning.

In the years since the first Prisoners' Justice Day, inmate activists have fought hard to win (or keep) their human rights. In 2002, inmates won the right to vote in federal elections, as we learned earlier. In December of 2010, inmates at several prisons in Georgia organized the largest prisoners' strike in U.S. History. For seven days they

refused to work, demanding fairer pay, better nutrition, and access to education. In March of 2011 inmates in British Columbia's Mountain Institution announced they are at work on organizing the first prison labour union in Canada.

There are many issues to be concerned or angry about in prisons. On Prisoners' Justice Day, prisoners and their allies on the outside remember that:

- ⤴ Aboriginal people are incarcerated at very high rates in Canada. Aboriginal people make up 4% of Canada's general population, but 20% of its prison population.
- ⤴ Many people do not get adequate medical care while in jail or prison.
- ⤴ People still experience violence while incarcerated, by staff and other inmates.
- ⤴ Inmates who are transgendered (who identify as a different gender than the one they were born) do not always have their needs met in prison, and are sometimes housed with inmates of their same sex rather than their same gender.
- ⤴ Canada's prison system is still expanding, with money put aside to build new prisons in 2012.
- ⤴ Many women are in prison for defending themselves against abusive partners.
- ⤴ Literacy rates (skills for reading and writing) are lower in correctional institutions than on the outside, but still inmates have very little access to education.
- ⤴ Many people are in prison because of serious mental health issues that could be managed some other way.

While prison conditions have improved since the 1970s, when Prisoners' Justice Day was born, it's important to remember that many people have died behind bars in Canadian prisons, and are still dying today. The article on the next page tells the story of Ashley Smith, a young woman who died in Grand Valley Institution after several years of misery in the justice system.

## Ashley Smith's requests for help ignored

Written by Diana Zlomiclic for the *Toronto Star*

Published on November 11, 2010

During her year in federal custody, teen prisoner Ashley Smith was trying to turn her life around — seeking counseling and medical support to stop the downward slide that led to her death while guards watched, correctional documents reveal.

Smith's prison records — released to Kim Pate, executive director of the Canadian Association for Elizabeth Fry Societies through a request made on the teen's behalf before she died — include thousands of documents and paint a far different picture of the young Maritimer than the one presented by the Correctional Service.

“There are at least 90 instances where she was trying to seek the assistance or support of staff,” Pate told the *Star*. “She was requesting access to programs, phone calls to her family, hospital visits.”

Pate said from her review of the records Smith's requests for assistance were ignored.

Smith was 19 in October 2007 when she choked herself to death with a strip of cloth inside a segregation cell at Kitchener's Grand Valley Institution. Correctional officers had been instructed by management not to enter the teen's cell so long as she appeared to be breathing. The order was an attempt to reduce paperwork.

Prison managers classified Smith as a problem inmate because she had taken to tying ligatures around her neck and would count on staff to remove them. A federal report that looked into her death said correction officials were primarily “security-focused” when dealing with the troubled teen.

Pate says the documents show Smith's attempts at self-harm escalated when prison officials responded to her calls for help by isolating her in segregation cells and drugging her.

Five months before she died, Smith asked Pate to review her prison files to find out why she had been confined to a windowless room 23 hours a day, for months on end wearing nothing but a padded suicide gown and shackles.

Last April, Federal Court Justice Michael Kelen said the Correctional Service of Canada broke the law by not releasing Smith's records while she was still alive.

“We didn't know the degree to which the law had been violated,” said Pate, “but these documents clearly show (the Correctional Service of Canada) violated its own policies.”

Pate's organization obtained the information in two batches over the past few months but has not publicly discussed the contents until now.

The records, Pate says, reveal more than 170 "use of force" incidents — where Smith was involuntarily injected with drugs or pepper sprayed to manage her behaviour. The count also includes at least 10 cases of involuntary body cavity searches.

There are at least 60 cases where Smith's signature should have appeared on personal documents such as psychological assessments but did not because she wasn't allowed to use a pen or her hands were handcuffed behind her back.

Smith landed behind bars at age 15 for breaching probation after an original incident in which she threw crab apples at a mailman in her hometown of Moncton, N.B. As a young offender, she racked up additional institutional charges that saw her time in custody continually extended.

Despite the family's objections, Smith was shunted into federal custody at age 18 and bounced through a series of institutions within the Maritimes, Quebec, the Prairies and Ontario.

An inquest into her death is scheduled to begin in January. Ontario's Deputy Chief Coroner Dr. Bonita Porter is expected to issue a ruling by Monday on the inquest's scope. The family has argued that the jury should hear about the "abhorrent" conditions spanning Smith's entire time in custody. Porter had initially planned to consider only the few months leading up to the teen's death, spent primarily in Ontario.

Pate hopes Smith's personal prison documents and the recommendations stemming from the inquest will "prevent this from happening to other women.

"We're still a long way away from people with mental health issues getting appropriate care."

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## Literacy Tip: Writing a Letter to the Editor

If there's an issue you care a lot about, writing a letter to the editor is one way to share your opinion. By sharing your opinion, you might be able to convince others the issue is important, or you might be able to change somebody's mind who disagrees with you. The Letters to the Editor section of the newspaper is one of the most popular sections, so you know you'll have an audience.

Most letters to the editor respond to articles the newspaper has printed. They might praise the newspaper for covering the issue in a positive or responsible way. They might express disappointment at the way the issue was represented – maybe negatively or with untrue information. They might respond to another letter that somebody else wrote. Letters share the writer's opinion on a subject. Remember how in Exercise #13 we talked about stating your position clearly and giving good reasons for it? You'll want to make sure you use this approach when you write a letter to the editor.

Letters that are short and to-the-point are most likely to get published. Try to keep yours to one or two short paragraphs, and less than 200 words. Use your personal experience or any special expertise you might have on the issue to make your letter unique. Keep it professional. It's perfectly okay to write a letter out of anger or frustration, but try to express your feelings without name-calling or exaggerating.

Below is an example of a letter that could be written in response to the story you just read:

Dear Toronto Star

Thank you for your excellent coverage of the death of Ashley Smith (*Ashley Smith's Requests for Help Ignored, November 11, 2010*). This story was difficult to read, but the public needs to hear it.

So much of what we see in newspapers focuses on prison as the solution to society's problems. Thank you for reminding readers that it can also cause considerable harm.

So many stories of suffering behind prison walls never come to light, because the media often does not care about the experiences of the human beings who are affected most by “tough on crime” policy. Responsible media should never lose sight of this.

Jacquie Nicholson  
Winnipeg, MB



## Lesson #15

### Stony Mountain Prisoners' Committee

As we learned in the last chapter, prisoners have a long history of organizing to try to make their lives better. A good example of a group that represents inmates is the prisoners' committee at Stony Mountain Institution, home to over 600 inmates serving federal time.

The prisoners' committee is elected by the inmates of Stony Mountain and paid a small wage to act as go-betweens in conflicts between inmates and staff, or between inmates and other inmates. The committee is made up of three inmates – a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary – who are skilled at resolving disagreements.

The committee deals with many different issues. They have brokered truces between rival gangs to try to make the institution a safer place. They have negotiated for the release of inmates from segregation. They have lobbied the institution to replace glass windowpanes with screens during summers when the prison becomes unbearably hot. In cases where an inmate feels he is being unfairly punished by a staff member, the committee sits down with the inmate and staff member to try to work out a better solution.

In summer of 2011 the committee met with both inmates and staff to negotiate the re-opening of the prison yard, which was closed just before the January 2009 riot because of a high volume of “throw-overs,” deliveries of drugs and other contraband over the prison fence.

“The institution had built a fence sectioning off just one third of the yard for our use,” explains Michael, vice-chair of the committee. “We met with the other inmates and

decided that we would agree to no more throw-overs in exchange for the use of the yard. This began gradually with just weekends, to build up trust, and then went from there.”

The committee has a difficult job, because it can sometimes be tough to balance the interests of inmates with the need to also work and cooperate with the institution.

“We have a no-nonsense approach and we aren't afraid to stand up to pretty much anything,” says Dennis, chair of the committee. “I think we get respect for that.”

Dennis and Michael both have experience as small business owners before their incarceration, which helps them in their jobs. They say they joined the committee last year to try to help re-normalize the jail. Things haven't been the same since the 2009 riot.

“We've lost a lot as a general population,” says Michael. “In the old setting, we had an open population. After the riot, because so many units are now segregated, everything got cut or reduced: visits, recreation, everything. It still hasn't gone back to normal.”

Michael and Dennis talked about what they felt were the most important issues facing inmates. They are worried that the “rehabilitation” offered by prisons is of little use to inmates in the real world, once they are released.

“The focus has been on programs and cognitive training,” says Dennis. “But when you go back to the street, most of these inmates have no money, might be staying with family or an ex-girlfriend. What do you want them to do? They aren't the type to work at McDonalds, and even if they were they might still have a hard time getting a job.”

Michael agrees. “Anger management and family violence prevention aren't going to put

food on the table,” he says.

Both agreed that there should be a focus on vocational training, especially trades like construction, or opportunities like Rockwood's prison farm program, which was cancelled in 2010.

“You always have to go to the root of the problem,” Dennis says. “The gangs are using the possibility of a decent living as a recruiting tool. They're saying to these guys who get out, 'You can make \$1,000 in a night.' When it's either that or be homeless, what are you going to choose? For this reason, jails breed gangs, and when you look at the cost of keeping people in prison, only to have them come out unable to function, it's absurd.”

Access to the community is also important in the rehabilitation of inmates. Dennis points out that inmates at other institutions have better access to Escorted Temporary Absences and Unescorted Temporary Absences than those at Stony.

Michael adds that inmates, institutions and the general public all need to think differently about the way we carry out justice in Canada. How do longer prison sentences benefit victims, offenders, or the community?

“We need to consider the need for someone who has committed a crime to atone for his actions,” Michael says. “Simply doing time – watching TV, playing cards, waiting for years and years – how does that help victims? I don't think more time is the answer. If all we have to offer in this system is more time, well, that's just sad.”

## Literacy Tip: Writing a Business Letter

We already talked about writing a letter to the editor. A business letter is usually a bit longer, and can be written for many different reasons. You might write a letter if you are applying for a job, making a complaint, or asking for permission to do something. Remember to separate your letter into paragraphs, beginning a new paragraph each time you have a change in subject.

Here is an example of a letter that JHS literacy wrote to the *Toronto Star* to ask permission to reprint their article about Ashley Smith in this workbook:

Jacquie Nicholson  
John Howard Society of Manitoba  
583 Ellice Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1Z7

August 22, 2011

Stephanie Lastname  
Toronto Star  
355 Mountain Avenue  
Toronto, ON M5E 1E6

Dear Ms. Lastname:

I'm writing to request your permission to reprint the article, "Ashley Smith's Requests for Help Ignored", which appeared in the November 11, 2010 edition of the *Toronto Star*.

I'll be using this article in an educational workbook I am writing for the students in the John Howard Society literacy program. The John Howard Society is a non-profit agency that provides services to inmates and ex-inmates. My program is located at the Winnipeg Remand Centre and my students are adult male inmates who have voluntarily signed up to improve their reading, writing and math skills.

We create some of our own learning materials for our literacy students, including a series of workbooks on topics they find interesting. Some examples of topics include communication, substance use, parenting and anger. The book I am hoping to use your article in is a book on politics, voting and activism. I'm planning to use the article in a reading and writing exercise in one of the book's chapters.

If you have any further questions about this request, please contact me at 775-1514 ext. 303. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Jacquie Nicholson  
Literacy Program Coordinator, John Howard Society





## Lesson #16

# The Self-Determination of Aboriginal Peoples

In Canada, we often read or hear about conflicts between Aboriginal communities and governments or business projects. In response, maybe you've heard people say that Aboriginal people "just can't get over the past" or that they are trying to get "special treatment." When we aren't being *critical*, we can easily be fooled into accepting these assumptions. However, when we are critical, we may ask questions about Canada's historical relationship to Aboriginal peoples, what the rights of Aboriginal peoples are, and seek out multiple perspectives on these issues, particularly the grievances of Aboriginal people themselves.

In Manitoba, you may have seen buses, billboards or posters stating that "We are all Treaty People." The European newcomers to this land signed treaties that included the rights and responsibilities shared with Aboriginal peoples on behalf of all the generations and immigrants to follow. As treaty people, we must work together, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike, to ensure the government honours the content and spirit of its treaties with Aboriginal peoples and, in areas without treaties, negotiates them in a way that does not undermine or violate Aboriginal peoples' rights.

Through the *British North America Act* of 1867 (now renamed *Constitution Act*), the British Crown granted the federal government authority over Aboriginal lands and affairs. After Confederation, Canada negotiated 11 numbered treaties between 1871 and 1921 to gain control over land, water and natural resources to further western settlement and development. In exchange, Aboriginal people were promised health, education, economic development, social assistance, and hunting and fishing rights. For many people, the spirit of the treaties was understood as a nation-to-nation relationship of land and resource-sharing, peace, and interdependence, not a surrender.

This nation-to-nation relationship was officially recognized as early as the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*, when the Crown guaranteed protection of Aboriginal peoples' rights to land and autonomy. Further, section 91(24) established federal responsibility, also known as the fiduciary relationship, for "Indians and lands reserved for Indians." This set a requirement for the Crown to ensure the protection of Aboriginal and treaty rights, which is still recognized within Canada's constitution today. However, the government's agenda of assimilation, settlement, and economic development have led to actions that violate these rights and harm Aboriginal peoples' way of life.

Beyond the legal imperative to respect the rights of Aboriginal peoples, it is important to recognize that Aboriginal peoples have rights and responsibilities to the land that pre-existed the arrival of Europeans and the creation of Canada. As Robert Williamson of Asubpeeschoseewagong (Grassy Narrows First Nation) states:

"We should not have to explain ourselves to the government and the court...The creator placed us here to live in freedom and harmony with the land, without boundaries and interference. We can't make a boundary around ourselves and limit our way of life. The paddles of our ancestors have touched the waters of every lake and river across this land. The feet of our relatives have touched the soils of the earth from here to the horizon...What the creator gives our people, we do not change or question...We are a part of this land and that is the truth."

As first peoples with a strong relationship to the land, Aboriginal peoples maintain the right of self-determination through which they sustain their cultural existence as nations in relationship to their territories. Self-determination is more than self-governance – it is an inherent right of nations to make meaningful decisions regarding a wide range of related and overlapping areas, such as decisions over land use and occupation, political status, language, culture, defining who is part of your nation, and even how decisions

will be collectively made. Through this lens, we can begin to understand the conflicts that exist between Aboriginal people and the governments of Canada, not as demands for special treatment, but as people exercising their rights and responsibilities as First Nations and treaty people.

In the article by Bryan Meadows, we learn about the court victory of trappers in Grassy Narrows First Nation against logging in their traditional territory. The Grassy Narrows First Nation of Treaty #3 territory in northwestern Ontario have struggled for decades with the legacy of residential schools and the loss of their livelihoods through the impacts of mercury poisoning in the river and the destruction of forest by clearcut logging. The following article will show why and how the Anishinaabe people of Grassy Narrows First Nation have resisted outside development in their territory and appealed to the federal government to fulfill their obligations so that they can maintain their traditional livelihoods and culture.

## **Grassy Narrows declares victory in logging dispute**

Bryan Meadows, the Chronicle Journal

Thursday, August 18, 2011

A Kenora-area First Nation is declaring victory in an 11-year court battle to stop logging on its traditional lands.

Grassy Narrows First Nation (Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek) had challenged the province's right to permit industrial logging on its traditional lands, saying it interferes with their rights under a treaty signed with the federal government.

Ontario Superior Court Justice Mary-Anne Sanderson has ruled that the province doesn't have the power to interfere with the band's treaty rights, which is a federal issue. The band stated in a news release Wednesday that the decision sets the stage for proper recognition and protection of Treaty 3 rights and, more importantly, will help protect the Anishinaabe way of life in Northwestern Ontario.

"Grassy Narrows hopes that this will be a turning point in this battle. We expect that real protection for the endangered boreal forest and our way of life will be put in place immediately," the band said.

The First Nation's lawyer, Robert Janes, said the judge also noted in her 300-page decision that the federal government promised to defend the band's rights, but hasn't done so for many years. Janes said the ruling will likely have legal implications for similar disputes in Ontario and across Canada.

One of the trappers who launched the case in 2000, Joseph Fobister, called the ruling a victory for his people, who set up a blockade in 2002 to stop logging trucks.

"We have struggled for many years to save our way of life in the face of uncontrolled clear cutting, which has contaminated our waters and destroyed our lands," he said. Grand Council Treaty 3 Chief Diane Kelly said "the premise that Ontario has a licence to develop our territory so that the Anishinaabe way of life becomes a relic of history was found to be unconstitutional.

"We now have a great tool to bring to both Crown governments and say work with us, help build the economy that Treaty 3 promised in 1873 and in doing so, let us not forget that the Anishinaabe way of life is as important as the Canadian economy, today and forever," Kelly added.

At a news conference in Toronto on Wednesday, Grassy Narrows Chief Simon Fobister

urged the provincial and federal governments to come to the table to negotiate a modern understanding that would respect and implement the First Nation's rights.

"This will require protecting the way of life of the Anishinaabe who were here before the logging industry came to these lands and will be here after the logging companies have moved on to other forests," he said.

Grassy Narrows also called on the province to honour the spirit and intent of the court decision by moving to eliminate clear cut logging in Grassy Narrows traditional territory, and to develop a new approach to natural resource management in partnership with the community.

A spokesperson for Northern Development, Mines and Forestry Minister Michael Gravelle's said the Ontario Superior Court decision is under review. Meanwhile, Greenpeace applauded the Superior Court ruling.

"Today we witnessed what should be the beginning of the end of the 'log first, ask later' approach of the Ontario government to Aboriginal treaty areas," said Greenpeace forest campaigner Shane Moffatt.

Greenpeace also called on the Ontario government to respect the judge's ruling that First Nations have the right to say no to industrial development in their territories.

"This historic judgment should mark a turning point in relations between First Nations and the rest of Canada," Moffatt said.

Justice Sanderson considered her decision for more than a full year, after hearing evidence and arguments over seven months, from Sept. 14, 2009 until May 3, 2010. This decision is the latest development in a long-standing dispute between the community and province to end industrial clear cut logging on its traditional lands. Government and industry officials failed to heed years of complaints from the First Nation, environmental assessment requests, meetings and public protests, giving rise to a grassroots blockade that started in 2002 that has kept logging trucks off Highway 671 since then.

In 2008, Grassy Narrows and the province entered into negotiations aimed at creating a positive government-to-government relationship by developing a long-term agreement for the protection, management and use of the Whiskey Jack Forest.

In April 2011, the parties entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to re-commit to that process and, among other things, plan for limited logging according to alternative

forestry methods proposed by Grassy Narrows. However, the community's concerns have not been resolved, and no substantive agreement has been reached, the band says.

Several major logging companies, including Boise, Domtar and AbitibiBowater, say they will not log within Grassy Narrows traditional territory; and little or no clear cut logging has occurred since AbitibiBowater surrendered its licence to the province in 2008.

— With files from The Canadian Press

## Literacy Tip: Critical Thinking

"When I gave food to the poor, they called me a saint. When I asked why the poor were hungry, they called me a communist."

--Dom Helder Camara, Brazilian Bishop and Nobel Peace Prize nominee

Often people use the word "critical" to mean someone who is negative or complains a lot. Have you ever been told you're "too critical?" This seems to be an all too common understanding of the word.

In reality, people use critical thinking skills every day when they think about what they read in the newspaper, question the claims of an advertisement, figure out solutions to problems at work, or resolve personal conflicts in the family. Critical thinking is an important part of living in a world where we encounter information, ideas and opinions everywhere we turn. We need to be able to figure out what information is useful, good or true, and what is just plain junk.

Critical thinking is an important part of literacy, as we need to question what we read and think about the meaning of text and images. Critical thinking is about asking questions to make sure we have enough valid information to make up our own mind, express our own opinions, and make the best choices possible.

There is another side to being critical. As in the quote above by Dom Helder Camara, being critical can also mean thinking about social, economic or environmental problems, and thinking about why they exist and how they were created. It is easy to accept the way things are in our world without asking or thinking about how they came to be that way. But a real critical thinker refuses to accept anything in society as "natural," "normal," or the only way of doing things.

Critical thinking is a matter of thinking about power in society: how decisions are made, how resources are distributed, and why certain problems exist. You have already used critical thinking in reading and responding to some of the questions about elections, voting, and political issues in this workbook.

In the next exercise, you'll use your critical thinking skills to think about Aboriginal self-determination. As you read, think about the following questions: Why are there so many people in the world without adequate food, health, education, and shelter? What are some reasons people give for this state of affairs? Do you agree or disagree with those reasons? Of course, there is no perfect answer to these questions, but the important thing is to ask questions, seek the truth and express yourself!

## Exercise #16

Look back at the article on the Grassy Narrows logging dispute. Why did the court rule that treaty rights are a federal issue and that the province has no business interfering with these rights?

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What are two ways mentioned in the article that the people of Grassy Narrows have exercised their right to self-determination?

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What are the different groups mentioned in this article? Who holds power in this situation? What does each group hope to achieve?

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Do you think the author of this article has an opinion on the story he's covering? What is it? How can you tell?

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Why is this court victory so significant to the people of Grassy Narrows? How do you think it could affect future relationships between First Nations and governments?

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## Lesson #17

### Where Do I Even Start?: Becoming a Volunteer

All this talk about changing the world might be starting to seem a little overwhelming to you. While fixing the justice system, protesting against war, fighting for prisoners' rights, protecting First Nations territories from logging, and creating giant art installations are all great projects, what if you're not quite there yet?

If you're worried you don't have the time or energy to become an activist, you can help your community just by becoming a volunteer. Volunteer opportunities come in thousands of different forms. Soup kitchens, kids' sports teams, literacy programs, community gardens, day camps, music festivals, and hospital visiting programs are all run by volunteers, and probably wouldn't exist without them.

Some volunteer gigs are a once-a-year thing, like helping out at a neighbourhood barbecue, a parade, or a charity drive. Others may need people to commit to helping out every week, or even more often than that. All are great ways to gain experience, improve your resume, and make a small difference in the world.

If you're living in the community and want to volunteer, you can check the *Winnipeg Free Press* every Monday for new listings. You can also find opportunities on the Volunteer Manitoba website at <http://www.volunteermanitoba.ca/>, or by checking in with local social services agencies such as Winnipeg Harvest, the Canadian Cancer Society, or Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Manitoba. The John Howard Society also occasionally takes volunteers to help with cleaning around the office and sorting clothing donations. You might also think about asking with your child's school or a community centre in your neighbourhood if there's anything you can help out with. If you have a criminal record there will be probably be some volunteer opportunities you

don't qualify for, but if you're patient you should be able to find something.

If you're incarcerated your options will also be much fewer, but you don't necessarily need to be hooked up with an official organization in order to be a volunteer. All on your own you could help other inmates who need assistance reading or filling out request forms, for example. You can also talk to the John Howard literacy program about opportunities. We can sometimes use help sorting our book donations, illustrating new workbooks, or proofreading the *Inside Scoop* newsletter.

If you have a certain skill and you really want to share it, be creative and you may be able to create your own volunteer position from scratch. Volunteering can be a very rewarding experience that can help you learn more about others and yourself.

## Exercise #17

Applying for a volunteer position usually involves talking about your strengths and qualities, similar to applying for a paying job. The following volunteer positions are real entries taken from the Volunteer Manitoba website. Read them over and choose one that sounds interesting. On the next page, write about why you want this volunteer position and why you'd be a good candidate for it.

Position title: Sports coach

Organization description: Robert A. Steen Memorial Community Centre is committed to providing the community with a variety of high-quality recreational activities in a safe and friendly environment.

Description of duties: We need volunteer coaches for a variety of sports and a variety of levels. We need people who have leadership experience, who enjoy working with youth, and who have a good knowledge of the sport they are coaching.

Position title: Aboriginal artist

Organization description: Ikwe Widdjiitiwin is a crisis shelter for Aboriginal women and their children. We are a non-profit agency and we offer safety, programs and short-term second stage housing.

Description of duties: We would like a volunteer to design and create an Aboriginal-focused poster depicting our shelter as a safe place for women and their children. We are looking for an artist who understands Aboriginal culture and how it relates to women who have been abused. This would be an excellent opportunity for someone to display their work across Winnipeg and Manitoba.

Position title: Bike repair helper

Organization description: The Bike Dump strives to make cycling and repair knowledge accessible to everyone. We organize democratically and non-hierarchically and we offer creative alternatives to automobile dependency.

Description of duties: We need volunteers to help with the operation of our volunteer-run bicycle repair "teaching" shop. This may include basic tasks like tidying up, helping people fix their own bicycles, teaching bike repair workshops, and driving loads of bikes from Brady Road landfill to community bike shops.

Position title: Delivery driver

Organization description: Meals on Wheels delivers nutritious meals to the people in our community who are unable to prepare or otherwise obtain them.

Description of duties: Our volunteer drivers pick up and deliver a route of up to 20 meals. Volunteers commit two hours once a week or twice a month, or spare when it fits their schedule.

Position title: Warehouse assistant/sorter

Organization description: ArtsJunktion MB Inc. is a community-based, charitable organization committed to supporting community artists and arts organizations. We gather reusable materials from businesses, organizations and individuals, that would otherwise be considered waste, sort them and make them available to all at no charge.

Description of duties: A typical day involves receiving and sorting new donations, creatively organizing shelving and displays, general cleaning, and welcoming new visitors to the depot. A variety of sit-down jobs for those who seek non-weight bearing tasks are available, as well as lifting and moving for those who prefer the opposite.

Position title: Kennel volunteer

Organization description: RESCUE Siamese is a no-kill shelter for Siamese cross cats in Manitoba.

Description of duties: We are looking for reliable volunteers to assist with feeding and cleaning cages for about 20 cats. Training is provided. You must be able to handle cats from 3-20 lbs, and work independently without supervision.

Choose a volunteer position from the list above, and write a few sentences about why you'd like to do this volunteer position and why you think you'd be good at it:

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## Lesson #18

### JHS Students Say, "It's Our Country, Too!"

While writing this book we talked to John Howard Society literacy students about some of the things they had done to improve their communities. They told us about a wide range of activities they had been involved in, everything from volunteering with youth to becoming a foster parent to marching at rallies.

One student had helped out at an after school child care program, supervising kids and playing games with them. He also remembers sandbagging for a neighbouring First Nation that was flooding, and building over 500 sandbags. Another student told us about how he and others from his northern community raised money for a youth rec centre and counselling program. They held fundraising dances and a 70 km marathon walk, raising nearly \$15,000.

"With the amount of drugs and alcohol that were going around the reserve, we thought if the kids had something to do, something to look forward to, it might help," he explains.

A student who has dedicated countless hours to tutoring other inmates in the John Howard literacy program says he is glad to have his volunteer work benefit both the students he tutors and the John Howard agency itself.

"It's kind of a way to give back," he says. "A lot of time people who are in need receive help. In my case, I received help from John Howard, so now I'm able to help them and other students. It's a give and take."

Another student feels very strongly about the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, discussed earlier in this book. He has participated in several marches, carrying a

sign with the name of a close family friend who was murdered. He believes the media and the police need to take the issue more seriously.

“This lady went missing last spring. It was on the TV for all of 30 seconds, and that was all I ever heard of it,” he says. “The police keep telling us they're putting this task force together specifically to investigate those crimes. But they've been putting it together for years and it's still not done.”

Other students volunteered to help out with Winnipeg's 2011 International Day Against Police Brutality by sharing their artwork and stories about police violence. One student's comments were read aloud at the rally.

“If police won't regulate the police, if the government won't regulate the police, then we as a people need to regulate the police,” he wrote. “Stand up and take back what's rightfully yours. Inform your friends and family, your neighbours, and your government. Stand against violence and corruption. Stand against police brutality!”

Still another student has big plans for how he is going to help his small First Nations community after he is released. He plans to start a community farm to provide food and work opportunities to his family and neighbours.

“Growing up, we had a big family,” he recalls. “We had 13 of us living in one little two-bedroom house, and we didn't have much food. Reserves are all like that, and that's why I think we need a way of growing our own food. We need to make sure all the kids are fed. That's the main goal: taking care of the next generation.”

We are proud of our students for all of their accomplishments, and wish them the best of luck in their future projects. Never forget that it's your country, too!



## Resources:

Here's a list of resources for those who are interested in learning more about voting, elections, volunteering or other community involvement. There is also a list of literacy resources, such as adult education centres and literacy programs in Winnipeg.

### Voting and Elections:

#### Elections Canada

- Information about voting in federal elections  
[www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)  
257 Slater St., Ottawa, ON K1A 0M6  
1-(800)-463-6868

#### Elections Manitoba

- Information about voting in provincial elections.  
[www.elections.mb.ca](http://www.elections.mb.ca)  
200 Vaughn St., Winnipeg, MB R3C 1T5  
945-3225 or 1-(866)-628-6837

#### City of Winnipeg 311 Service

- Dial 311 for all of your questions about City of Winnipeg services and municipal elections

#### Conservative Party

- Ask about party policies or get contact information for Conservative MPs or MLAs  
Conservative Party of Canada: 1-(866)-808-8407, <http://www.conservative.ca/>  
Conservative Party of Manitoba: 942-8283 or 1-800-663-8679, <http://www.pcmnitoba.com/>

#### New Democratic Party

- Ask about party policies or get contact information for NDP MPs or MLAs  
New Democratic Party of Canada: 1-(866)-525-2555, <http://www.ndp.ca/>  
New Democratic Party of Manitoba: 987-4857 or 1-877-863-2976, <http://todayndp.ca/>

#### Liberal Party

- Ask about party policies or get contact information for Liberal MPs or MLAs  
Liberal Party of Canada: 1-(613)-237-0740, <http://www.liberal.ca>  
Liberal Party of Manitoba: 988-9380 or 1-800-567-5746, <http://mlp.manitobaliberals.ca/>

#### Green Party

- Ask about party policies or get contact information for Green Party candidates  
Green Party of Canada: 1-866-868-3447, <http://greenparty.ca>  
Green Party of Manitoba: 488-2831 or 1-(866)-742-4292, <http://greenparty.mb.ca/>

#### Communist Party of Canada

586-7824, <http://www.parti-communiste.ca/>

#### Christian Heritage Party

- 1-888-868-3247, <http://www.chp.ca/>

#### Fair Vote Canada

- Fair Vote Canada is a multi-partisan national citizens campaign promoting fair voting systems for use in elections at all levels.  
[www.fairvote.ca](http://www.fairvote.ca), 1-(416)-410-4034  
3 Macdonell Avenue #302, Toronto ON M6R 2A3

### Literacy and Adult Education Centres

#### LiteracyWORKS Incorporated

786-1212  
230-500 Portage Avenue

This program provides adults with the opportunity to develop and improve basic literacy skills in reading, writing, spelling and basic math. Students receive tutoring on a one-to-one basis by trained volunteers and learning plans are customized to the student's goals. They are open both during days and evenings, and students can register at any time of year.

#### Open Doors Adult Literacy Programming

586-1878  
825 Selkirk Avenue

Open doors offers classes two mornings, four afternoons, and two evenings per week. This program assists students with basic literacy, computer skills, and GED preparation. Coffee and snacks are provided during each session and babysitting is available on site free of charge. Open doors also has a summer program that runs for six weeks during July and August.

#### Aboriginal Community Campus

989-8860  
403-181 Higgins Avenue

This centre offers both upgrading and academic programs. Upgrading means helping learners to bring their reading, writing and math skills up to a Grade 10 level. The academic program offers learners the chance to obtain their Mature Student Grade 12 diploma, where eight credits are required to graduate. Students can join at anytime, and the centre continues to run during the summer months.

#### Horizons Learning Centre

772-1234  
Located in Portage Place Mall, 222 Furby Street, and 431 Thames Avenue

Learners may complete their Mature Grade 12 diploma, improve employability skills, or complete the credits they need to get into college or university. The centres are open during the afternoons and evenings as well as during the summer.

Louis Riel Institute Adult Learning Centre  
984-9480  
103-150 Henry Avenue

This centre offers high school credits to allow students to complete their Mature Grade 12. Some courses are classroom-based, while others are independent study. Louis Riel Institute is a Metis-focused Adult Learning Centre, but all adult learners are welcome to attend.

Learnline  
947-5757 or toll-free at 1-866-947-5757

The Learnline is for adults who are looking for a place to continue their education. Whether you need help with very basic reading and writing skills or help completing a Grade 12 diploma, the Learnline is the number to call. Learnline staff will help students to find a learning program in the community that is right for them.

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