

Ellen Fairclough: Educational Activity

This activity covers broad areas of learning, including Canadian history, government, and human rights. Students will have the opportunity to discuss Fairclough's plans, goals, and intentions throughout her political career. This activity also encourages students to examine the struggle for women's rights in Canada and the role of women in Canadian government today. Consult the online primary documents and website text as resources.

Introduction

- Begin by examining Fairclough's early life and education. Consider the challenges she faced in politics, her time in the House of Commons, and her work in John Diefenbaker's Cabinet, first as Secretary of State and later as Postmaster General.
- Give students the opportunity to study the primary documents and familiarize themselves with Fairclough's role in the Canadian government.
- Encourage students to conduct background research to enhance this activity.

Refer to the following links:

- [Canadian Women in Government: Ellen Fairclough](#)
- [Parliament of Canada: Ellen Fairclough](#)
- [Forging Our Legacy: Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, 1900-1977](#)

Activity

- In small groups, have students research the developments and advances made by women in the Canadian political sphere. Here, historical events in Canadian women's rights can be highlighted, including the suffrage movement and the 'Persons' case. It is also important to look at the many important figures who have advanced women's rights in Canada, including Agnes Macphail, the Famous Five, and Bertha Wilson. Students could also be broken up into groups to create a historical timeline of events.
- The development of language could also be examined in this section, focusing in the importance of gender diversity in policy making, as well as gender neutral language, official government documents and relevant vocabulary.
- Guide students in identifying and exploring women in historic and contemporary politics. Additional research could also be done on women in international government and leadership roles.
- Students can explore what it might mean for women in Canada to not have basic rights, and consider what their lives would have been like prior to the suffrage, equal rights, and first wave feminist movements.
- In concluding the activity, students will have become familiar with Ellen Fairclough, her political career, and the history of women in Canadian government. They will have had the opportunity to learn about how gender equality in the Canadian government has changed over time, and will have an understanding of the importance of gender neutral language, as well as be able to define important terms.

Optional Activities

- Students can discuss any challenges women currently face in their advancement in the political sphere. What might these challenges be?
- Additional resources available upon request from the Diefenbaker Canada Centre for extended learning opportunities.