

The Crown in Canada: Educational Activity

This activity is designed to introduce students to the complex relationship which exists between Canada and the British Monarchy, and conceptualize the relationship between Commonwealth nations and the Crown. The focus of the activity is a simulated Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (similar to a model United Nations activity), where students must balance their own national interests with the pressures exerted by other nations as represented by their classmates. Students will also have the opportunity to learn about some of the key issues in British relations in which the Diefenbaker government was involved. Consult the online primary documents and website text as resources.

Introduction

- Introduce students to many of the similarities shared by former British colonies (symbols, political structure, history, etc.).
- Introduce the major functions of the Crown in Canada, including the role of the Governor General, Lieutenant Governors, and the concept of Royal Assent.
- Explain that even though the members of the Commonwealth have attained independence, they still have a close relationship with Britain and a common history. The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 countries that support each other and work together towards shared goals in democracy and development. Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings occur every two years to work towards these goals.
- Give students the opportunity to study the primary documents and familiarize themselves with the relationship between Canada and the Crown.
- Encourage students to conduct background research to enhance this activity.

Refer to the following links:

- Constitutional Documents (Canada)
- The official website of The British Monarchy, Queen and Canada
- The official website of the Governor General of Canada
- The Commonwealth, Head of the Commonwealth

Activity

- In this simulation you could choose to assign each student to a particular country, or allow them to select their own. (A list of Commonwealth nations is available on Wikipedia under the heading "List of members of the Commonwealth Nations.") Encourage students to conduct background research on their respective nations to enhance this activity.
- Select a member nation to "host" and facilitate the meeting by introducing issues for the other nations to consider. Suggestions include:
 - Britain would like Commonwealth nations to begin giving them special deals on traded goods; students should be advised that their countries would lose money from doing so.
 - While Commonwealth nations have a history of not criticizing each other's internal policies, Canada spoke out against South Africa's policies of apartheid in 1961. Encourage students to

introduce a motion which would critique another member for something they have done recently.

- The year is 1965, and Canada has just changed its flag, removing all symbolic ties to Britain. The British representative expresses displeasure and insists that Canada change the flag to include British symbols. Encourage other nations to weigh in on why this is positive or negative.

Optional Activities

- Additional resources available upon request from the Diefenbaker Canada Centre for extended learning opportunities.