

Lesson Plan or Classroom Activity

Title: Redesigning a Legislature for the 21st Century

Audience: Grade 10 Social Studies / Political Studies 11 / BC First Peoples 11

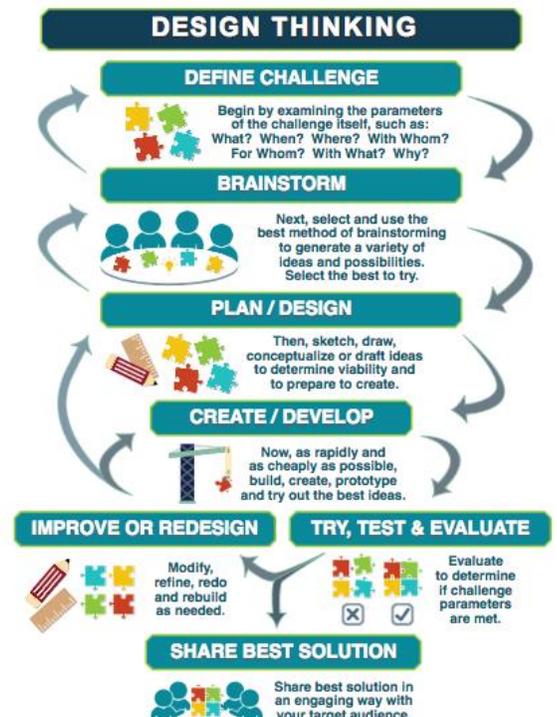
Overview: Political institutions and ideology shape both the exercise of power and the nature of political outcomes. How can our legislature be more representative of post-colonial values and indigenous ways of knowing? How can we reform our institutions to reflect society's efforts at reconciliation?

Objectives:

- Enable students to research and design possible alternatives to the current Westminster-style legislative chamber.
- Expose students to the existing structure and the history and traditions within the Westminster style.
- Allow students to learn about First Nations forms of government, and other models that better reflect the diversity of Canadian society.

Activities and Methods:

- Students will design their own legislature in order to reflect how they feel government should function, communicate and portray itself – design should reflect Canadian political process, history, and function of government, but also more modern values such as multiculturalism, diversity and plurality of viewpoints.
- Use design cycle of inquiry. →
- Share out design, accompanied by a justification and explanation of how their creation is an improvement over the current system or how it better enables a democratic process and dialogue.



- For extra challenge (to add elements of voice and choice), have students choose a perspective on which to base their model (i.e.: female perspective, First Peoples' perspective, youth perspective, religious perspectives).

Preparation (by teacher and by student):

- Hook: Reichstag model - symbolizes that people are above the government as was not the case during Nazi Germany. Berlin's attempt to have a united democratic Germany is manifest in this design. Design highlights transparency of government and democratic process.
- Introduction to Westminster-style Parliament and traditions.
- Presentation of the Legislative Assembly of BC's educational resources about the history of parliament and current legislative process. Visit the website at: www.leg.bc.ca to access these resources (brochures, fact sheets, posters).
- Ask students in what way this model is still relevant to Canada? In what ways does it no longer reflect the country's diversity?
- Teacher could also present alternative existing models of legislatures, for example the Reichstag, Iroquois Confederacy, Nunavut and Northwest Territories consensus models of government.

Duration of Activity: 4 – 5 classes

Learning Standards:

- Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their significance at particular times and places, and from group to group (significance).
- Assess the justification for competing accounts after investigating points of contention, reliability of sources, and adequacy of evidence (evidence).
- Assess how prevailing conditions and the actions of individuals or groups influence events, decisions, or developments (cause and consequence).
- Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs (perspective).
- Make reasoned ethical judgments about actions in the past and present, and determine appropriate ways to remember and respond (ethical judgment).
- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions.

Materials and Resources:

- Students are free to choose the form in which they want to present their legislature. Options could include a poster, drawing, a 3-D model, Google Sketch-up, or other.
- Sample educational resource from Legislative Assembly of BC:
<https://www.leg.bc.ca/content-peo/Learning%20Resources/Magna-Carta-Display-Fact-Sheet-English.pdf#search=king%20john>

Evaluation of Activity:

- Inquiry-based criteria, for example: collaboration, research, quality of sources, creativity.
- Make clear to students that criteria for evaluation are based on demonstrating an understanding of their project and its development, rather than on the physical product itself.

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NOTE: *The ideas and opinions expressed in this classroom activity belong to their authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. The Parliamentary Education Office only edits for clarity.*

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