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Learning Activity: Understanding Party Perspective vs. Personal Preference

Students will understand the difference between voting based on party perspectives and voting based on personal perspectives, as well as the role of the Party Whip. Students will be able to communicate their party platform effectively, critically analyze and question opposing platforms, and come to a conclusion on their own personal values.

Grade level / Big Idea: Grades 6-9

Grade 6: Systems of government vary in their respect for human rights and freedoms; economic self-interest can be a significant cause of conflict among peoples and governments.

Grade 7: Increasingly complex societies required new systems of laws and government.

Grade 8: Changing ideas about the world created tension between people wanting to adopt new ideas and those wanting to preserve established traditions.

Grade 9: Emerging ideas and ideologies profoundly influence societies and events.

The physical environment influences the nature of political, social and economic change.

Provide a short description of the activity you want learners to engage in:

In this learning activity, students will engage in two different voting simulations based on a high-interest policy issue. In each vote, students will follow a different set of voting procedures, gaining an understanding of related implications and the role of the Party Whip.

The teacher will start the lesson by introducing relevant parliamentary vocabulary terms, and explaining the party system (including current voting procedures and the role of the Party Whip). Students will then be briefed on the policy issue to be voted on, and divided into three parties - each with a unique perspective on the policy issue at hand. Students will be given time to review their party's perspective on the issue and prepare to present it to the class. Each party will present their perspective to the class, and be prepared to answer any questions from the opposing parties.

The students will then engage in their first vote - an open vote where students are encouraged to vote with their party by the Party Whip. The vote will be calculated, and the results shared with the class. At this point, students will complete Reflection 1, analyzing the political consequences and social implications of voting against their party.

Students will then engage in a second vote - a blind vote where students can anonymously vote based on their personal perspectives. If required, students may be given additional time to complete further research (using supplied materials) to learn more about the issue. At this point, students will complete Reflection 2, a reflection on the second vote will explore the students' feelings about party politics and the Party Whip.

Curricular Competencies (*what students will be able to do*):

Grade 6:

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to — ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
- Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments (significance)
- Ask questions, corroborate inferences, and draw conclusions about the content and origins of a variety of sources, including mass media
- Sequence objects, images, or events, and recognize the positive and negative aspects of continuities and changes in the past and present (continuity and change)
- Differentiate between short- and long-term causes, and intended and unintended consequences, of events, decisions, or developments (cause and consequence)
- Take stakeholders' perspectives on issues, developments, or events by making inferences about their beliefs, values, and motivations (perspective)
- Make ethical judgments about events, decisions, or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond (ethical judgment)

Grade 7:

- Assess the credibility of multiple sources and the adequacy of evidence used to justify conclusions (evidence)
- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to — ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Grade 8:

- Explain different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues or events and compare the values, worldviews, and beliefs of human cultures and societies in different times and places (perspective)
- Determine which causes most influenced particular decisions, actions or events and assess their short and long term consequences (cause and consequences)
- Make ethical judgements about past events, decisions or actions, and assess the limitations of drawing direct lessons from the past (ethical judgement)

Grade 9:

- Physiographic features of Canada and geological processes
- Connections between Canada's natural resources and economic activities
- Compare contrast physical features and natural resources

Core Competencies (how does this activity align with Communication, Personal & Social Responsibility, Creative & Critical Thinking):

Communication

- Connect and engage with others (to share and develop ideas)
- Acquire, interpret, and present information (includes inquiries)
- Collaborate to plan, carry out, and review constructions and activities
- Explain/recount and reflect on experiences and accomplishments

Critical Thinking

- Analyze and critique
- Question and investigate
- Develop and design

Positive Personal & Cultural Identity

- Personal values and choices

Overview of the learning opportunity:

Part 1: Pre-Learning

- Provide each student with an outline for the 3-2-1 Bridge pre-activity reflection. "Tow the Party Line"
- Explain how to complete the pre-activity reflection (you may have to explain and give examples of analogies)
- Depending on how much time you are spending on this activity and what grade level you are teaching, you can complete the next 4 steps in the form of class discussion or using student driven research/investigation:
- Discuss (or have students investigate) how political parties interact when voting on issues (ensure that your students understand majority vote and both inter and intra party behaviour)
- What does it mean to vote your conscience? When might you do that and why?
- What does it mean to vote with your party? When might you do it and why?
- Define and discuss trophy hunting (or issue being presented) and determine students' prior knowledge - this can be done in the form of a brainstorming session with someone recording ideas on the whiteboard.

Part 2: Party Perspectives

(Three party positions have been provided based on the trophy hunting issue activity.)

- Divide students into three groups according to the following proportions: Party A (60%), B (20%), and C (20%).
- Give students time to read their party perspective, and with their group, discuss the rationale behind the proposed policy, as well as the long-term impact of the policy.

Part 3: Voting Simulations

(Teachers may wish to situate desks in the form of a Legislative Assembly for the following activities.)

- Each “Political Party” presents their perspective to the class, and discusses both the rationale for, and the impact of, their proposed policy. Teachers may:
- Conduct the First Vote by standing roll call (Yea/Nay), then post and discuss the results of this outcome.
- Hand out Voting Reflection questions and have students answer the “First Vote” reflection questions.
- Post the party perspectives so that students can view all perspectives in preparation to cast their second vote. Provide additional information or research if necessary, and remind students that this vote will be anonymous.
- Conduct the Second “Free” Vote, reminding students that they can vote freely based on personal perspective.
- Post the results of the second “free” vote, and compare them to the results of the first vote.
- Students answer the “Second Vote” reflection questions, as well as the “Benefits and Drawbacks of Voting Systems.”

Part 4: Post-Learning Reflection

- Complete the second 3, 2, 1 Bridge. Discuss how perspectives have changed.
- Complete the learner self-reflection questions as part of a class discussion

Suggestions for challenge-based or inquiry and cross-curricular integration

Provide students with an issue currently being tabled in the Legislature, and either provide background information on each party’s position, or have them research a party’s platform. Divide students into voting groups that are proportionately representative of our current government. Allow students to debate the merits of each platform within their caucus and/or in a “Question Period” style format. Determine whether or not to include a “Party Whip” member in each group and investigate the potential consequences of voting against your party. Have students research the restrictions on Party Whips in other legislatures.

Learner self-reflection questions

Questions to be discussed after learning activity:

- What does it look like when I communicate effectively?
(criteria/descriptors are determined through class discussion prior to beginning the exercise)
- How did I demonstrate critical thinking in this activity?
- How do political decisions shape our social identity?
- Which voices have been left out of this discussion?
- How may the Indigenous perspective differ?
Would proposed laws be enforced on traditional territories?
- What effect does the physical geography have on Canadian regional identity?
- What perspectives do different groups have on the use of natural resources?

Resources

Key Vocabulary (see below for example handout - teacher may adjust terms according to students' prior knowledge):

- **Act**, amendment, **bill**, constituency, electoral district, first reading, **free vote**, **governing party**, Independent member, **law**, legislation, **Legislative Assembly**, Lieutenant Governor, mace, MLA, motion, **political party**, Premier, public bill, riding, royal assent, second reading, Sergeant-at-Arms, Speaker, statute, third reading, **Whip**.
- See the following link for detailed definitions, as well as more vocabulary terms :
<https://www.leg.bc.ca/Glossary>

Trophy Hunting:

- What is trophy hunting in BC? (YouTube Video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLwhWhGeRhg>
- Grizzly Bear Population Status Map: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/plants-and-animals/grizzly-viz.html>
- Grizzly Population Status in BC: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/plants-and-animals/grizzly-bears.html>
- Grizzly Bear Hunting FAQs: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/management-issues/docs/grizzly_bear_faq.pdf

Reported Party Perspectives:

- Proposed NDP Policy: <http://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/ndp-government-to-enact-bc-wide-ban-on-grizzly-trophy-hunt-while-allowing-hunt-for-meat>
- Green Party Perspective: <http://www.news1130.com/2017/08/15/bc-greens-trophy-hunting-grizzly-bears-ban/>

Role of the Party Whip:

- Role of Party Whip in Supporting a Functioning Minority Government (Provincial):
<https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/party-whip-crucial-to-survival-of-bcs-narrow-minority-government/article35280769/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>
- Role of Party Whip, and need for Restrictions in Freeing MPs (Federal):
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/free-the-mps-canada-needs-rules-to-restrict-party-whips/article12662366/?arc404=true>

Lesson Materials:

Key Vocabulary:

Act - A bill that has passed third reading by the Legislative Assembly and has received Royal Assent.

Bill - Proposed legislation that is presented to the Legislative Assembly for its consideration and approval.

Free Vote - A vote during which individual private members may vote for or against a bill, regardless of their party's official position. Members of cabinet are always expected to vote with the Government.

Governing Party – The political party that wins the majority of seats in an election or the party that is able to maintain the support of a majority of the Legislative Assembly's members. The leader of that party is called upon by the Lieutenant Governor of BC to serve as Premier and form government.

Law - a bill that has passed all stages in the Legislative Assembly and has received royal Assent and has been proclaimed.

Legislative Assembly of BC- The lawmaking body of British Columbia, consisting of all the elected Members, as constituted under the provincial Constitution Act.

Political Party – a group of people sharing a particular ideology and set of goals that puts forward candidates for election to the Legislative Assembly.

Whip - A Member of the Legislative Assembly whose roles is to keep other members of his or her party informed about House business and to ensure their attendance in the House, especially when a vote is to be held.

Fictitious Political Party Perspectives on “Trophy Hunting in BC:”

Party A: Complete Ban on Grizzly Bear Hunting

Party A believes that hunting grizzly bears is unethical, and the legislature should enact a complete ban on the hunting of grizzly bears in British Columbia. Grizzlies are an endangered species which provide valuable tourism revenue in BC. Grizzlies play an important role in keeping our ecosystems in balance, thus, the resulting ban would fit into a renewed wildlife management strategy for the province. Wildlife advocates say hunting and habitat loss are the two biggest threats to the species. The Wilderness Committee estimates that 4,000 grizzlies have been killed since the previous government reinstated the trophy hunt in 2001.-BC Nature president Alan Burger, a wildlife biologist at the University of Victoria, said, “It’s more than just a population issue. It’s a moral issue and it’s an ecosystem issue. People enjoy seeing bears, and having someone come and take out a bear in a place where naturalists enjoy seeing them to me is just immoral.”

Party B: Ban on Grizzly Bear Trophy Hunting

Party B believes that trophy hunting should be banned, however, hunters should still be allowed to hunt grizzly bears for meat. They propose that the legislature should enact a law to end grizzly bear trophy hunting throughout the province, and forbid meat hunters from possessing the paws, head, and hide. Hunting would also be completely banned in the Great Bear Rainforest - a 19-million-acre rainforest that is part of the largest coastal temperate rainforest on Earth. Until now, the primary reason someone would go out to hunt a grizzly bear is for sport. This policy would end that practice, ensuring that grizzlies who are lawfully killed, are consumed for meat - not for photos and bragging rights.

Party C: Continue the Current Policy, allowing for Grizzly Bear Trophy Hunting

Party C believes that trophy hunting plays a valuable role in sustaining our economy, and in maintaining a healthy grizzly population. In 2012, BC government scientists estimate that there were 15,000 grizzly bears in British Columbia and that the 250 grizzlies hunted each year account for less than two per cent of the overall grizzly bear population. Without the grizzly bear hunt, populations of grizzly bears could grow in size, contributing to a dangerous imbalance in our ecosystem. In addition, the province receives about \$540,000 in grizzly hunting licences annually, of which \$500,000 goes into general revenue, and \$40,000 to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. This funding helps to sustain a healthy environment and economy. As cost estimates of grizzly bear hunts range from \$13,000 to \$27,000 per hunt, the overall economic benefit to the provincial economy exceeds 5 million dollars.

Voting Reflection Questions

First Vote:

Do you agree with your party's position on this issue? Why or why not?

Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable voting in line with your party? Why or why not?

What sort of consequences might there be to you voting against your party?

Second Vote:

Did your vote change during the free vote? How did the overall outcome change?

Did you change your opinion based on something that you learned? If so, what?

Did the opinions of your friends influence your opinion? Why or why not?

Benefits and Drawbacks of Voting Systems:

What **benefits** are there to a system that **enforces party discipline** (First Vote)?

What **benefits** are there to a system that **enables free votes** (Second Vote)?

What **drawbacks** are there to a system that **enforces party discipline** (First Vote)?

What **drawbacks** are there to a system that **enables free votes** (Second Vote)?

3-2-1 Bridge
A routine for activating prior knowledge and making connections

***Your initial
responses to the
topic***
3 Thoughts/Ideas
2 Questions

1 Analogy

***Your new
responses to the
topics***
3 Thoughts/Ideas
2 Questions

1 Analogy

Bridge:
Explain how your new responses connect to your initial responses?
credit “Making Thinking Visible”

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