Activity: The Road to Citizenship

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This activity is inspired by the "What it Means to Be a Canadian Citizen" (November 2026) issue of *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*.

This activity explores the different paths to citizenship as well as the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizens. Students will explore the evolution of Canadian citizenship, reflecting on what it meant in the past and today.

Grade: 7/8

Time Required: One to two classes (60-90 minutes)

Themes:

- Canadian Identity
- Settlement & Immigration

Subject Area: Social Studies/History

Inquiry Question: What does it mean to be a Canadian citizen?

Historical Thinking Concept: Continuity and change

Lesson Overview: Canadian Citizenship has changed a lot over the years. There are requirements to become a citizen today, and all citizens have rights and responsibilities.

Students will:

- Create a KWL chart as a class, identifying gaps in their understanding about Canadian citizenship
- Reflect on and discuss what it means to be a Canadian citizen in the past as well as today

Activity

Activating:

The minds-on introduces students to the inquiry question: **"What does it mean to be a Canadian citizen?"** and engages students in reflecting on their own experience and knowledge through a KWL chart.

- Write the inquiry question on the board: What does it mean to be a Canadian citizen?
- Invite students to turn and talk to discuss what they already know about Canadian citizenship, what it might mean to them, and what questions they have.
- Then, create a KWL chart on the board, with three columns titled: Know, Want to Know and Learned. Invite pairs to share what they already know and write their statements in the first column. Write them all down, even if some of them are wrong. Have the class also write the statements in their own KWL chart in their notes.
- Invite pairs to share their questions and write these in the second column: Want to know. Alternatively, you can invite pairs to write their prior knowledge and questions on sticky notes and have them place them on the chart. You would then read them out and write them up larger for the class to write on their own chart.

Acquiring:

Invite students to read the article "The Road to Citizenship" (p. 4-7) in pairs or small groups to discover the answers to their questions. Assign each pair or small group to only read one page of the text.

As a small group, students read the text together and discuss what was confirmed, what was debunked and what was expanded. They can code the text in the first column using symbols such as these:

(✓) — CONFIRMED

(X) — DEBUNKED

(←→) — EXPANDED

Together they discuss what questions were answered and take notes on these in the third column under "What I learned."

Then, create a jigsaw, by forming small groups of four. Each student in these new groups should have read a different page of the text. Students then share with each other what they learned, confirmed, or debunked, completing their own KWL charts as described above.

Applying:

Hold a class discussion and invite all groups to share back one thing they learned about Canadian citizenship. If needed, you could prompt them with this question:

- What did it mean to be a Canadian citizen in the past? How has it changed?

- Then, share with a partner what it means to you to be a Canadian citizen, what surprised you, what you want to learn more about and what you do or hope to do that shows others that you know your rights and responsibilities.

- Write your reflections on an exit card or in a thinking journal.

Extension:

Have students share their reflections about their responsibilities in a class discussion and choose an activity together that honours the students' values and demonstrates their citizenship responsibilities.

Exit Card:

- What it means to me to be a Canadian citizen
- One thing that surprised me or that was new to me
- Something I want to learn more about
- What could I do that shows others that I know my rights and responsibilities?

KWL Chart: What does it mean to be a Canadian citizen?

Use these symbols to code the text in the first column as you read:

(✓) — CONFIRMED

(X) — DEBUNKED

(←→) — EXPANDED

WHAT I KNOW ALREADY	WHAT I WANT TO KNOW	WHAT I LEARNED