

Lesson Four

Resistance and Demanding Change

Lesson Objective

Students will recognize how pressure and activism from equity-deserving groups can result in significant changes in thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and systems.

Driving Question

What societal factors or conditions allow for individuals or groups to create positive change in Canada?

Materials

- Backgrounder: Demanding Change (page 38)

Lesson Summary

Students will learn about how a community of people came together to advocate for and achieve change. They will examine primary source correspondence, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and legal cases that will illustrate how laws and policies can be interpreted in multiple ways that can simultaneously protect and discriminate.

Pre-Teaching Supports

“Why Queer History Matters: Two views from Western Canada,” by Valerie Korinek and Scott de Groot. *Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada’s LGBT Purge – Reflections on queer history and why it matters today*, pp. 58-73.

Primary Sources

[Confidential letter written in 1976 by the Deputy Director General about gay liberation groups](#)

[A letter written to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1977 by the National Gay Rights Coalition](#)

[A letter written by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1978](#)

Additional Documents

[Letter dated 1987 by George Wilkes to the Minister of National Defence](#)

[Response letter dated 1977 from Canadian Forces from Gay Social Services Project](#)

[Government of Canada letter to Solicitor General on James Stiles v. Her Majesty the Queen](#)

Instructions for Teachers

Introductory Discussion

1. How has life in Canada become different since your grandparents'/elders' time?
2. How have human rights in Canada changed in the last 60 years?
3. Who or what drove that change?

Reading

Backgrounder: Demanding Change (page 38)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. How did the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* fall short of protecting rights of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals?
2. How did the Charter provide a way for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals to create change?

Activity

1. Review the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Focus on Article 15.
2. Have students discuss the creation of the Charter. Have them look at Article 15 and see if they can identify the protected rights that are not included, such as sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
3. Watch the [Heritage Minute about Jim Egan](#) then read "Charter Challenge; Egan v. Canada (1995)" included in the backgrounder Demanding Change (p. 38).
4. Examine the court case Egan v. Canada and the importance of this case on future court rulings.
5. Have students research other precedent-setting cases such as:
 - a. 1992: Haig and Birch v. Canada
 - b. 1998: Vriend v. Alberta
 - c. 2002: Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36
 - d. 2005: Board of School Trustees of School District No. 44 v. Azmi Jubran, et al.
 - e. 2012: S.L. v. Commission scolaire des Chênes
 - f. 2021: Attorney General Québec v. Centre for Gender Advocacy
 - g. 2023: Hansman v. Neufeld

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. What is the significance of the Egan Case in the interpretation of the Charter going forward?
2. How does the Egan case show the importance of standing up for human rights?
3. How have other court rulings advanced 2SLGBTQI+ human rights in Canada?

Demanding Change

Students are shown a primary source of a community group writing letters to the Prime Minister.

- a. [Confidential letter written in 1976 by the Deputy Director General about gay liberation groups](#)
- b. [A letter written to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1977 by the National Gay Rights Coalition](#)
- c. [A letter written by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1978](#)

Follow-up Discussion/Assigned Questions

1. How do you think these letters were received by their intended audiences?
2. What does this sample of correspondence tell us about how the government and 2SLGBTQI+ communities were approaching this issue?
3. Based on what you have learned about the LGBT Purge, do you think these letters helped create change? Justify your response.

Extension Activity

Here is additional correspondence that could be examined in a similar way as above;

- a. [Letter dated 1987 by George Wilkes to the Minister of National Defence](#)
- b. [Response letter dated 1977 from Canadian Forces from Gay Social Services Project](#)
- c. [Government of Canada letter to Solicitor General on James Stiles v. Her Majesty the Queen](#)

Current Implications

- a. Discuss in what ways the LGBT Purge relates to current issues that 2SLGBTQI+ communities are facing.
- b. What can we learn from the Egan case and/or other cases, Charter challenges and lobbying the government as a way to create change?
- c. Based on class discussion, identify an issue 2SLGBTQI+ communities are facing and an action that could be taken to advocate for and create change. E.g. write a letter, create awareness, critique policy, etc.
- d. Get students to develop a detailed plan to implement these actions..