LESSON FOUR

CANADA’S CAPITAL TREASURES

Seven classroom-ready lesson plans and five introductory videos highlight and explore the significance and importance of Canada’s Capital Treasures. These treasures represent knowledge, sacrifice, commitment and ingenuity. This series of lesson plans is available for download at canadascapital.gc.ca/education.

FAMOUS FIVE MONUMENT

MATERIALS

*Women are Persons!* video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_CL3eYWjA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_CL3eYWjA)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learner will:

- Appreciate the contribution women have made to Canadian society;
- Write a script to convey the feelings and thoughts of the Famous Five about their success;
- Use effective text to write a persuasive headline;
- Celebrate those engaged in local community–building;
- Create a timeline to mark significant achievements of rights in Canada;
- Compare techniques used in informational videos.

KEYWORDS

*Women are Persons!;* the Famous Five; Barbara Paterson; Irene Parlby; Louise McKinney; Nellie McClung; Emily Murphy; Henrietta Muir Edwards; Senate of Canada; Parliament Hill.
Lesson Four

Famous Five Monument

WOMEN ARE PERSONS!, PEACE TOWER IN BACKGROUND, 2005

The monument, just a short distance from the Parliament Buildings, celebrates the Famous Five’s victory.

INTRODUCTION

Walking along Wellington Street in Canada’s Capital is like taking a trip through the country’s law-making process. Along the length of this short street, visitors pass by the House of Commons, the Senate, and the Supreme Court of Canada. And, if visitors veer off the path just a little, they will find themselves having tea with five women who changed the rights of Canadians forever.

A hundred years ago, Canadian women did not have the right to own their own house, to vote as they saw fit, or to aspire to many professions. And they certainly did not have the right to be appointed as a member of the Canadian Senate.

As the video “Women Are Persons” illustrates, in 1928, the Famous Five — as Alberta’s Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, and Henrietta Muir Edwards are better known — fought to be recognized as “persons.” At that time in Canada, women could not legally be appointed to the Senate.

The Famous Five decided to fight this law and took their case all the way to the Supreme Court. They were denied the right, but they were not deterred. Their next stop was Britain’s Privy Council, which overruled the Supreme Court decision.

Between the First World War and Second World War, Canadian women won many rights, including the right to vote, hold office, own property, and sit as a senator. In subsequent years, more legislation was extended to protect the rights and freedoms of other Canadians, such as people of Aboriginal descent, people with disabilities, and new Canadians.

Civic engagement — when ordinary citizens participate in democratic change, such as getting involved in protests, petitions, or peace marches; writing letters to their members of Parliament; or challenging a law in court — is a cornerstone of Canadian democracy. The struggles and achievements of the Famous Five and other pioneers in social engagement have affected Canadians across the country, and continue to inspire citizens to exercise their hard-won rights.

On the very grounds where the Famous Five won their historic victory, a monument commemorating their success can be seen and enjoyed by all. Created in 2000 by Alberta artist Barbara Paterson, the Women Are Persons! cast bronze monument is one of the few on Parliament Hill that honour “ordinary” citizens.

The action is frozen in a moment of victory — the women raise cups of tea in celebration and hold a newspaper of the day, boldly declaring that “Women are Persons!” The artist chose this scene deliberately: 100 years ago, Canadian women campaigned for “suffrage,” as the right to vote is sometimes called. As part of their effective organizing strategy, suffragettes held “pink teas” — parties that are deliberately festooned with doilies and pink decorations, a setting distasteful to men, where women could plan action to further women’s rights.

In a tip of the hat to both the past and the future, Paterson included an empty chair in her sculpture, inviting visitors to celebrate the Famous Five’s victory for all Canadians.

ACTIVITY ONE: WRITE A SHORT PAPER

Since 1928, many women have served in the Canadian Senate. Choose one and write a short paper about her life, her achievements, and her contributions to Canada.

ACTIVITY TWO: WRITE A NATIONAL HEADLINE

Newspapers have to capture the heart of a story in a few short words. Often, a person other than the writer of the main story composes the headline. Look at a national newspaper, either in print or online. How do headlines encourage people to read further? How can people across the country understand the headline? Would a headline about the same story get a different treatment from a local newspaper? Compare two newspapers, one national, another local. Select a story, but don’t include the headline. Exchange stories with a classmate and write a headline for the story.
ACTIVITY THREE: PROPOSE A NEW COMMEMORATION

Who are the people making a difference in your community? How have they changed things for the better? Look up the term "civic engagement." What does it mean? In small groups, select someone from your community, past or present, who has made a positive difference. Design a monument to celebrate his or her successes. In Barbara Paterson’s sculpture, the empty chair invites visitor participation. Can your monument do the same? Propose this monument to the rest of your class.

Activity extension: Two copies of Paterson’s bronze sculpture were cast: one is on Parliament Hill, the other one is in Calgary, Alberta. Does your monument have a provincial or national angle? Could it be located in Canada’s Capital? If appropriate, suggest an Ottawa location for a copy of your monument.

ACTIVITY FOUR: WRITING A SCRIPT (GRADE 1 OF HIGH SCHOOL IN QUEBEC OR GRADE 7 IN ONTARIO)

The Famous Five sculpture looks just like a real-life scene about to be played out. Write a script that conveys information about the Person’s Case while capturing the personalities of Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, and Henrietta Muir Edwards. Imagine what each of the Famous Five might have said on the day that the newspaper headline read: “Women are Persons!” If you wish, take the empty chair offered in the sculpture, include yourself as the sixth person in the room, and add your own voice to your script.

ACTIVITY FIVE: CREATING A TIME LINE (GRADE 2 OF HIGH SCHOOL IN QUEBEC OR GRADE 8 IN ONTARIO)

Paragraph four of the Introduction lists various rights won by Canadian women between the First World War and the Second World War, and it mentions legislation created or extended to protect the rights and freedoms of other Canadians, such as people of Aboriginal descent, people with disabilities, and new Canadians. In fact, as recently as June 2011, the Canadian Human Rights Act, introduced in 1977, was changed to include Aboriginal Canadians who were previously exempt under the Indian Act. Create a time line that spans 1867, the Confederation of Canada, to the present-day and include on it the ‘Women are Persons’ decision, as well as other events and legislation that you consider most significant to yourself and other Canadians.

ACTIVITY SIX: CHARTING THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM (GRADE 3 OF HIGH SCHOOL IN QUEBEC OR GRADE 9 IN ONTARIO)

In 1928, women could not legally be appointed to the Canadian Senate. The Famous Five fought this law, but the Supreme Court denied their right. At the time, there was a higher court that had jurisdiction in Canada. This was Britain’s Privy Council, and it overruled the Supreme Court decision. Research that decision. Since that time, there have been changes in the relationship between Britain and Canada. Now, Canada is independent from Britain. Research to find out how these changes affected the functioning of the judicial system in Canada. Create two charts, one outlining the “hierarchy” of the judicial system in Canada as it existed in the 1920s and one as it exists now, and compare them. Think about the decision the Supreme Court of Canada made in relation to the Person’s Case in 1928 and whether the Court would make the same decision today. How does this help you understand the nature of the law and its interpretation?
WOMEN ARE PERSONS!, 2005

The Famous Five are shown celebrating their victory with cups of tea. An empty chair invites visitors to join the party.

MEDIA LITERACY ACTIVITY

View the video, “Women are Persons!”
Then view (or review) the video, “The Response: National War Memorial.” How are the sculptures highlighted in these videos similar? How are they different? Jot down your responses. Now focus on the videos themselves. How do they use similar and/or differing techniques to engage the viewer in understanding the significance of their subjects, the sculptures? What can you learn from this?