



# NATIONAL CHILD DAY

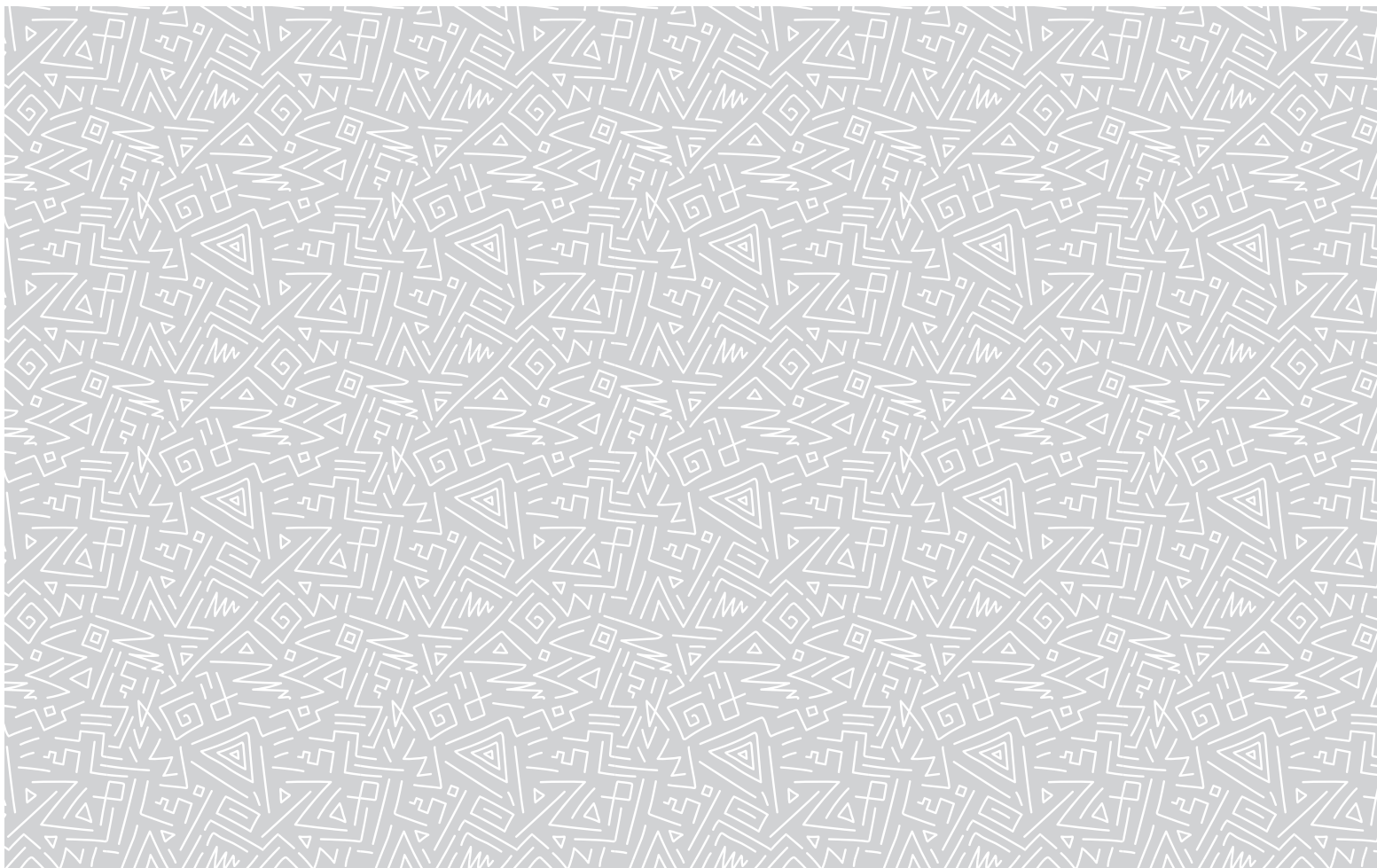
## Child Rights Activity Guide



Public Health  
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé  
publique du Canada

Canada



**TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT THE HEALTH OF CANADIANS THROUGH LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP, INNOVATION  
AND ACTION IN PUBLIC HEALTH.**

—Public Health Agency of Canada

Également disponible en français sous le titre :  
*Journée nationale de l'enfant : Guide d'activités de l'enfant*

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# CELEBRATING CHILD RIGHTS

National Child Day is celebrated in Canada on November 20<sup>th</sup> each year. Celebrating National Child Day is about celebrating children as active participants in their own lives and in communities, as active citizens who can and should meaningfully contribute to decision-making.

**Right**—the things that allow children to live to their fullest potential

**Need**—the things that are absolutely necessary for all children to have or be able to do to live a happy and healthy life

**Want**—the things that are nice to have but are not necessary for a full life

Celebrate National Child Day with the children and youth in your life by using the activities and ideas in this guide. The learning activities are designed to be fun, practical and easy to use by teachers, parents, youth group leaders and camp facilitators, among others. This activity guide is not a comprehensive rights document. However, throughout the guide are ideas for children to learn about and celebrate their rights. Children are also encouraged to reach out to their local, national and global communities to engage on child rights. Finally, young Canadians can facilitate their own learning and outreach using the “You Have the Right to Know Your Rights” and “Generation GO” sections of the guide. Specific curriculum units from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in all of Canada’s provinces and territories recognize the importance of child rights education. This guide fulfills the curriculum expectations described below.

## Through this guide participants will have the opportunity to:

- › Demonstrate an understanding of equality, human dignity and justice
- › Distinguish between needs and wants
- › Identify the rights and responsibilities of children in Canadian and international contexts
- › Understand the importance and interdependence of child rights
- › Explore and demonstrate an understanding of the Convention
- › Work cooperatively in groups
- › Consider and be respectful of the rights and opinions of others.

Learning about child rights may stir up sensitive and controversial issues that require further discussion. To access more child rights resources and ideas, please visit the National Child Day website at [Canada.ca/national-child-day](http://Canada.ca/national-child-day).

The adoption of the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989 was a significant development, but it didn’t occur spontaneously. Explore the important child rights developments of the recent past using the milestones on the following page. Then experiment with the activities in this guide and commemorate National Child Day the “rights” way!



## Child Rights Milestones

<p><b>1924</b></p> <p>Geneva <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> adopted by League of Nations.</p>	<p><b>1959</b></p> <p>Declaration on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN</p>	<p><b>1979</b></p> <p>International Year of the Child.</p>	<p><b>1989</b></p> <p>UN adopts the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i></p>
<p><b>1990</b></p> <p>World Summit for Children held at the United Nations.</p>	<p><b>1991</b></p> <p>Canada ratifies the UN <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>.</p>	<p><b>1993</b></p> <p>Canada designates November 20 as National Child Day</p>	<p><b>2002</b></p> <p>UN Special Session on Children results in <i>A World Fit for Children</i>.</p>
<p><b>2004</b></p> <p>Launch of <i>A World Fit for Children</i>.</p>	<p><b>2007</b></p> <p>Commemorative high-level meeting to follow up on outcomes of the Special Session on Children.</p>	<p><b>2019</b></p> <p>30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>.</p>	<p><b>2021</b></p> <p>30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Canada's ratification of the UN <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>.</p>

## The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is based on four principles:

<p><b>PRINCIPLE 1</b></p> <p><b>Non-discrimination</b></p> <p>All children have rights and they must be respected without discrimination.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 2</b></p> <p><b>Best interests of the child</b></p> <p>When decisions are made that affect the lives of children, it's very important to think about what is best for the child.</p>
<p><b>PRINCIPLE 3</b></p> <p><b>Right to survival and development</b></p> <p>Governments should help children live and grow to be the best they can be.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 4</b></p> <p><b>Participation</b></p> <p>Children have the right to give their opinions in all matters that affect them and to have their voices heard. Their views should always be taken seriously and should have more weight as they grow older.</p>

# I. RIGHTS FOR ALL

In order to celebrate the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, it is important to understand what child rights are and what role the Convention plays. Use the activities in this section to explore what rights are, that all children have them, that they differ from wants, and that they have all been agreed to in the Convention.

## ACTIVITY:

# THE CURIOUS VISITOR

**Ages: 4–8**      **Time: 30–50 min**

**Preparation:** Print a copy of one of the child-friendly versions of the UNCRC, which are available under “More information for educators” at [Canada.ca/national-child-day](https://Canada.ca/national-child-day). Collect chart paper and a marker, a clean garbage can or stuffed animal and a suitcase. Assemble photos and items to represent some articles from the Convention:

- > toy – right to play
- > toy house – right to a home
- > food item – right to nutritious food
- > soccer ball – the right to be active

1. **Discuss** the things all children need to live well. Record the group’s ideas on chart paper. Produce your collected items as each is mentioned. Pack them in the suitcase. For ideas you don’t have items for, have a volunteer draw a picture, use photos cut from a magazine or choose something from the room to represent the ideas.
2. **Create** an alien visitor using a decorated garbage can placed upside down or use a stuffed animal and introduce it as Zorp.
3. **Explain:** As has been reported in the news, planet Earth is being visited by friendly aliens. These aliens are curious about human life. Zorp is here today because he wants to learn about human children and what they need to live full, healthy and happy lives.
4. **Explain:** Talking to aliens like Zorp is tricky because we don’t speak the same language. So we are going to provide Zorp with pictures and items that describe our ideas. We’re going to pack Zorp a suitcase with these items so he can take them home.
5. **Explain:** Since Zorp knows nothing about children, he needs us to organize our ideas into two categories: things you absolutely need to survive and live well (needs) and things that are nice to have but living well does not depend upon them (wants). Discuss the difference between ‘needs’ and ‘wants’. Organize the list into the two categories.
6. **Conclude** that most basic needs are also called rights. The governments of the world have agreed to provide for and protect rights for every child. Using the child-friendly version of the Convention, paraphrase and discuss a few articles. Do any of these rights surprise you? Which ones? Why? Do you have all these things? Do all children have these things? Why are these things important for all children to have?
7. Pack the Convention. Pack the chart paper. Wish Zorp well on his journey home.

**Note for young participants:** Highlight only the rights that are easily relatable to their lives and simple to represent with an object or drawing.

Create a postcard and draw one of the rights in the UNCRC—send to a friend or give it to a classmate!

## ACTIVITY:

# A CHILD'S RIGHTS AND WANTS<sup>1</sup>

**Ages: 9–18**      **Time: 60–75 min**

**Preparation:** Collect markers, sticky notes, and one large paper per group. Print copies of one of the child-friendly versions of the UNCRC, which are available under “More information for educators” at [Canada.ca/national-child-day](https://Canada.ca/national-child-day).

1. Organize participants into groups of 3–5. Hand out markers, sticky notes and paper to each group.
2. One group member lies down on the paper and their outline is traced.
3. Instruct the groups to imagine that this paper person represents a child. Groups should give their child a name.
4. Groups brainstorm all of the things their child will need to have and be able to do now, in their childhood, to grow up happy and healthy. Explain that some of their ideas will be things that we can touch and have physically (like nutritious food). Other ideas will be things that we can do or have but that can't be seen or touched (like privacy). Each idea should be recorded on a different sticky note and placed inside the child's outline.
5. After brainstorming, groups debate and then leave the 20 most important ideas inside the paper outline. They set the others aside in a pile.
6. Then each group shares some of their ideas about their child and the things he or she needs to grow up happy and healthy.
7. Announce that, unfortunately, circumstances in their child's life mean that they will not be able to have or be able to do all of the things the group feels are necessary. Each group must choose the 5 least important items (leaving 15 remaining) to remove from their paper outline. They set these aside in a separate pile.
8. Explain that sadly their child will have and be able to do even fewer things in their childhood. The group must choose the 5 least important items inside the outline and remove them to a separate pile. They will have 10 items remaining.
9. Regroup and discuss:
  - What are some of the things you have remaining inside your child's outline? Do we see similar ideas among the groups?
  - What were some of the items you removed in the first elimination? What about in the second or in the third?
  - Did it get harder to decide which items to remove the more you were asked to take away? Why?
  - What can we say about the items remaining on your paper versus the ones you removed in the first elimination?
  - Discuss the difference between 'needs' (the things that are absolutely necessary for all children to have or be able to do to live a happy and healthy life) and 'wants' (the things that are nice to have but are not necessary for a full life).
10. Now introduce the Convention and explain that it is a list of child rights that governments have agreed to uphold. All of the rights in the Convention are considered equally important and necessary for a full life.
11. Hand out a copy of the Convention to each group. Have participants draw a line down the middle of their child splitting them in two. They label one side 'rights' and the other side 'wants'. Then participants categorize their sticky notes under the two categories. They can use the Convention for help.
12. Post the paper children up around the room and have participants circulate to see the ideas of other groups.

**For ages 9–13:** Do this activity as a large group. Have each participant brainstorm one idea and stick it on the child. Lower the number of initial ideas needed to 15.

**For parents:** Try this activity with your children on National Child Day.

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<sup>1</sup> This activity was adapted from “What Does a Child Need?” in *ABC: Teaching Human Rights* by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

## ACTIVITY:

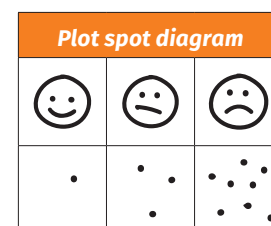
# PLOT YOUR SPOT

**Ages: 12–18**      **Time: 60–75 min**

**Preparation:** Collect markers, sticky notes, and one large paper per group. Print copies of one of the child-friendly versions of the UNCRC, which are available under “More information for educators” at [Canada.ca/national-child-day](https://Canada.ca/national-child-day) (one per pair of participants). Copy one statement (see below) and the ‘Plot spot’ diagram (see below) on a piece of chart paper. Repeat for the remaining 7 statements. Tape the papers up around the room.

1. Give one marker to each participant. Have participants move around the room and place one dot on each ‘Plot spot’ diagram to reflect how they feel about that statement. They should place a dot under the happy face if they agree fully with the statement. They should place a dot under the quizzical face if they agree with the statement only sometimes. They should place a dot under the sad face if they never agree with the statement. Participants should place their dots independently of how others have placed theirs.

**Please note:** The following statements are meant to provoke discussion and should not be presented as facts. The method used in this activity allows participants to give their opinions anonymously. Only participants comfortable with sharing their opinions should contribute to the group discussion.



Statements/Example of a reworded statement	Corresponding child right
Children should have as much money as they want. <i>Cannot reword as there is no related child right.</i>	Not related to a right. This is a want.
Children should have clothes in the latest fashions. <i>Children should have adequate clothing.</i>	The way it is worded, it is a want.
When children disagree, they should be able to say anything they feel. <i>Children should say what they feel as long as it does not harm others.</i>	<b>Right to your own opinion.</b>
Parents should choose their children’s friends. <i>Parents should respect their child’s right to choose their own friends.</i>	<b>Right to choose your own friends.</b>
It is never okay for children to bully other children. <i>Does not require rewording.</i>	<b>Right to protection from harm.</b>
Junk food is good for a child’s development. <i>Nutritious food is good for a child’s development.</i>	<b>Right to nutritious food.</b>

2. Everyone sits when they are finished. Discuss the results of each plot spot. Ask: Why did you take the stand you took? Are you surprised by the results? Did you have difficulty deciding where to put your dot? Why?
3. Have participants form pairs. Hand out a copy of the Convention to each pair. Explain that the Convention is a list of child rights that governments around the world have promised to protect. Child rights can be thought of as the basic things all children need to have or be able to do in order to live a healthy, happy life.
4. Each pair uses the Convention to determine which right is related to each statement (see answers above). Discuss the answers as a large group. Ask: Are there any statements that are not related to a right? (*Yes. Children should have as much money as they want.*) This statement deals with a ‘want’ of many children (and adults). Children do not require as much money as they want to live a healthy, happy life. Discuss other examples of things children often ‘want’.
5. Ask: What did you learn from this activity?

**Extension for older participants:** Have pairs determine how to reword the statements so that they accurately represent each right they are related to (see Examples of reworded statements above). Share some reworded statements as a large group.



## II. EXPLORING RIGHTS

Go deeper on National Child Day and use the activities in this section to explore the topic of child rights further.

### ACTIVITY:

## RIGHTS WEB

**Ages: 4–11**      **Time: 30–40 min**

**Preparation:** Collect 1 ball of yarn. Choose an open space for this activity.

1. Introduce the activity as a fun way to visually symbolize child rights.
2. Have participants stand in a circle. Hand the ball of yarn to one person. They say “I have rights. (*Another participant’s name*), you have rights too.” Then they hold tight to one end of the yarn and toss the ball to the person they named. That participant chooses someone to throw the yarn to, repeats the statements, holds tight to the yarn and tosses the ball on. This process repeats until everyone is linked into the web.
3. Explain that the web they have created is a good symbol for child’s rights for a few reasons:
  - All children in the world have the same rights, just like every person in our circle holds the same yarn.
  - Our web links all of us together, just like child rights are linked together. Have a few participants tug at their string one at a time so that the tug is felt by others around the circle.
  - Let’s explore what happens when children are denied the rights they deserve. With everyone still holding their yarn, read the scenario below and ask the following questions: What things does the child in this story not have that they need? For example, the group may agree that the child is being denied the right to play and rest. Let’s pretend that (name a participant) represents the right to play and be active and (name another participant) represents the rights to rest. What will happen to our web if \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ drop their yarn? Instruct the two participants to drop their yarn. Discuss what happens.
  - Our web is strong because we are all part of it. We are all equally important to the strength of the web, just as each child right is equally important to the health and happiness of a child.
  - Ask: What did you learn from this activity? Why is a web a good symbol for child rights?

**Scenario for young participants:** *Rehka comes from a family of 8 children. She goes to school each day but has to help take care of her younger brothers and sisters before and after school. On weekends Rehka works with her uncle in his shop to help earn extra money for her family. Rehka has very little time for playing with her friends or relaxing around her house. Rehka is 10 years old. (Right violation: article 31)*

**Scenario for older participants:** *Six months ago Jack’s parents kicked him out of the house for not obeying their rules. Since then Jack has been living on the streets and selling drugs to buy food. Jack is 14 years old. (Rights violations: articles 3, 5, 9, 19, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 33, 39)*

Share what you’ve learned  
about child rights—tell five  
friends about the UNCRC!



**ACTIVITY:**

# A WORLD OF RIGHTS!

**Ages: 4–11**      **Time: 60–75 min**

**Preparation:** Collect photos from magazines, newspapers or the Internet of children in various countries of the world. Choose photos that clearly illustrate one child right in action. Try to find photos that show how children's experiences with rights can be very different in other parts of the world. Give a list of the rights that correspond with the photos.

Have children explore the photos and match each photo to the right it represents. To use with large groups, cut each photo into 3–6 puzzle pieces. Mix up the photo pieces and give one to each child. Have them circulate to find the other pieces that complete their photo. These children form a group. Each group explores their photo, matches it to a right from the list and then rotates to the next photo. The process repeats until each group has viewed all of the photos. Tell the story of each photo to the large group and review the right it matches.

**ACTIVITY:**

# RIGHTS RADIO

**Ages: 9–18**      **Time: Several group sessions**

**Preparation:** Have children find a recent news story that interests them about a child or children in another country.

Instruct them to choose only stories that clearly demonstrate child rights being upheld or denied. Children then work in groups to create a radio broadcast that they will 'air' on National Child Day. The broadcast should include an interview and a newscast that focus on the topic of child rights. Participants use the news stories to form the content of their broadcast. They perform their broadcast for the large group or for the entire school over the PA system on National Child Day.

**ACTIVITY:**

# REPORT TO THE UN

**Ages: 14–18**      **Time: Several group sessions**

**Preparation:** Youth work in groups to choose a country and one child right to focus on. They prepare a report card to use to evaluate how well that right is being upheld and protected for the children in that country.

Participants choose indicators that will allow them to fully evaluate the right (i.e. literacy rates, percentage of children who attend school, average teacher to student ratio – for the right to education). They assign a grade (percentage of 100, letter grades or levels R-4) to each indicator and explain with comments why they chose that grade. Then groups gather to present their report cards to the United Nations (represented by the facilitator, teacher or other youth).

# III. RIGHTS COME WITH RESPONSIBILITIES

When governments around the world committed to the Convention, they accepted the responsibilities that come with ensuring rights for all children.

Explore the connection between rights and responsibilities with the activities in this section.

## ACTIVITY:

# WORKING TOGETHER

**Ages: 4–8**      **Time: 45–60 min**

**Preparation:** Prepare a copy of 'A Traditional Story' (see next column). Collect a long stick (e.g. broom handle) with a fork attached to one end, food on a plate and a pair of chopsticks.

1. Read 'A Traditional Story' aloud. Show the chopsticks.
2. Discuss how the people in the story might have felt.
3. Show the fork on the stick and the food. Ask for volunteers to try to do better than the people in the story. They can only hold the end of the broom handle furthest from the fork. Explain that the broom handle is standing in for the huge chopsticks.
4. Help the participants see how they could help each other. They can't feed themselves, but they can feed each other. Have the participants demonstrate.
5. Discuss what would happen if the people in the story never came to understand this solution. Working together they could eat, but on their own they would starve.
6. Conclude that all children have rights but they also have responsibilities to work together, to be kind to one another, to help each other and listen to each other. When children work together and with adults, we can find answers and accomplish things that we can't on our own.

## A Traditional Story

Once upon a time there was a group of travelers. They had been traveling for a long, long time. They were tired and hungry. They had no food left and wanted to find a place to have a meal. At last, they came upon a big house.

They knocked on the door and waited. Eventually the door opened and a man invited them in. "What do you want?" he asked.

"We have come a long way," said the travelers, "and we are very hungry. Can you spare us a little food?"

"Certainly," replied the man. "There is plenty of food here. Follow me." He led the hungry group into a room.

In the room was a huge table with many bowls of food. The travelers could not believe their eyes!

"You can eat as much food as you wish," the man told them, "but you must only eat with these chopsticks."

He gave each person a pair of chopsticks. They were not ordinary chopsticks. They were so big they looked like they belonged to a giant!

The hungry travelers tried to eat the food, but try as they might, they could not get any food into their mouths.

The man watched, feeling sad that they could not find a way of eating the food.

Do you know what the man wanted to see them do?

Host an event to recognize local children, youth and adults who go above and beyond to defend and protect child rights - give out Child Rights Champion Awards

## ACTIVITY:

# TWO HANDS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

**Ages:** 9–13      **Time:** 60–75 min

**Preparation:** Collect construction paper in various colours, scissors and markers.

1. What does hand in hand mean?
2. Explain that rights and responsibilities go “hand in hand”. You can’t have rights without responsibilities. For example, children have the right to privacy. They also have the responsibility to respect the privacy of others.
3. Grab construction paper and trace both your hands then cut them out either yourself or with the help of an adult.
4. Choose one right from the Convention and write it on the left hand, you can be creative and draw it as well. Then write and draw the responsibility you believe goes along with your right on the right hand.
5. When all are finished, have each participant share their right and responsibility with the group.
6. Share your left and right hand cut outs with the group or someone else and then post it on the board or somewhere others can see.



Collect stories, facts, and create messages about child rights and hand them out at your school, a community centre, or to your friends!

**ACTIVITY:**

# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**Ages: 14–18      Time: 100–120 min**

**Preparation:** Print copies of the following two pages of this guide (“Group Work Instructions” and “Scenario”) as well as copies of one of the child-friendly versions of the UNCRC, which are available under “More information for educators” at [Canada.ca/national-child-day](http://Canada.ca/national-child-day) (one copy of each document for each group). Collect markers and chart paper for each group. Reproduce the table below on the board with the second and third columns blank (except the headers) to use for the discussion in steps 1–3.



1. Discuss that children are considered rights-bearers, and in addition to having rights they also have responsibilities.  
*Example: “The right to give your opinion” corresponds to a responsibility to “express opinions in ways that do not harm another’s rights”.* Ask: Why is it important to have responsibilities as well as rights?

Child rights	Possible responsibilities of children	Possible responsibilities of duty-bearers
The right to play and rest	The responsibility to be helpful around the house	The responsibility to protect time to rest/play
The right to protection from harm.	The responsibility to not harm others	The responsibility to protect children from harm
The right to nutritious food	The responsibility to make healthy food choices	The responsibility to teach children the importance of eating healthy food

2. Point out the rights on the board and brainstorm possible responsibilities to correspond with each right. There are many possible answers. See the examples provided in the second column of the table.
3. Ask the group: Who, other than children, have the responsibility to protect the rights of children? (*Duty bearers: the government, parents, child rights advocates/organizations, families, friends, etc.*) Assign one duty-bearer responsibility to each of the child rights. See the examples provided in the third column of the table.
4. Organize the participants into groups of 5. Explain that they will use their understanding of rights and responsibilities to debate the issue of a proposed ban of the sale of junk food from their high school cafeteria.
5. Hand out copies of the scenario, group work instructions and UNCRC child-friendly version, as well as markers and chart paper. Review instructions for group work first.
6. When the group work is complete, gather everyone together and share group conclusions. Ask: Was this a difficult decision to make? Why or why not? What have you learned from this activity?

**Alternate version:** Families interested in this topic can debate whether or not to ban junk food from their household and camps/churches/daycares can debate running junk-food-free facilities.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES SCENARIO:

**Note:** *This scenario is fictitious.*

You are a high school student. You have been elected as a student advisor on a committee formed to decide whether or not to ban the sale of junk food from the school cafeteria. The committee is made up of school staff members, parents, students, a public health nurse, cafeteria staff and school board members. It is your responsibility to represent the interests of the student population.

The issue was raised by a group of concerned parents and the local public health nurse. They report that over the last 25 years, the obesity rate in Canada among 12–17 year olds has tripled. And 59% of Canadian children and adolescents consume less fruit and vegetables than the recommended minimum of 5 servings a day. These young people were significantly more likely to be overweight or obese. Other schools that have implemented similar bans have shown improved behaviour and decreased illness among the student population.

It has been proposed that the junk food options be replaced with healthy food options based on Canada's Food Guide. When you surveyed students that buy food from the cafeteria, you found that 72% of those students preferred junk foods (like French fries and burgers) to healthy foods (like whole wheat wraps and salads). You also found that 80% of the students who preferred junk foods would go elsewhere to purchase their lunch if these options were not offered.

The majority of students surveyed were happy with the current selection of food for sale in the cafeteria.

You are aware that a ban on junk food would result in major changes. The preparation of healthy, fresh foods will require more staff as they often need more preparation work. The kitchen will need more refrigerators. The contracts with soft drink companies and frozen food suppliers would have to be terminated or renegotiated. The student council and athletics department both benefit from the sale of pop and snacks from vending machines. Their profits could be significantly affected by a ban on these foods.

Your school is focused on protecting the rights of children, so the committee has decided to examine the issue with attention to the rights and responsibilities that will be affected by this decision.

Will you vote for or against a ban on junk food?

### Extension

Visit <https://food-guide.canada.ca> to learn about Canada's food guide. Use what you've learned to prepare healthy meals or snacks for your family, school or centre. Use this as a way to educate others about a child's right to healthy food.

Research what healthy eating looks like for children in different cultures and ethnicities. Or share healthy food recipes, beliefs or customs from your heritage. Cook up what you find and share it with others.

Record the number of food commercials that appear in two hours of children's TV programming. Make a note of what types of food are advertised and common words/phrases used to describe the food (i.e. "part of a nutritious breakfast"). All children have the right to get information important to their well-being. How does this type of programming measure up?

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES GROUP WORK INSTRUCTIONS:

**Read the scenario. Discuss each question and record the group's ideas on chart paper.**

1. Are you a rights-bearer or a duty-bearer?
2. What rights would be affected by a ban? What rights would be affected if the ban were turned down?
3. What are your responsibilities as a rights-bearer? What are the responsibilities of the duty-bearers (i.e. Principal, school board, parents, cafeteria staff, Public Health Agency)?
4. Discuss points for and against the ban. Mention the rights and responsibilities in your discussion.
5. Are there any rights and responsibilities that conflict with one another? If so, how do we resolve these conflicts?
6. Decide how you will vote. Why will you vote that way?
7. How do we go forward from here? Is a full ban necessary or is there a possible middle ground? What course of action will best protect the rights of the students in the school?

**Be prepared to share your conclusions and main points of discussion with the larger group.**



## IV. EXPRESS YOUR RIGHTS

Much of the power of rights comes with knowing that you have them. **Children have the right to know and understand their rights.**

Use the activities in this section to encourage children to teach others about child rights.

### ACTIVITY:

## A SPECIAL GIFT

**Ages: 9–13**      **Time: Several group sessions**

**Preparation:** Choose enough rights from the Convention so that each participant will receive just one right. Pick the articles that are easiest to illustrate.

Write each one on a separate piece of paper. Hide these papers around the room. Collect paints, pencil crayons, markers, magazines and paper.

1. Explain that the participants will be searching for something very special today—something really worth searching for. They are only to find one and be seated once they have found it.
2. Once all of the articles have been found and everyone is seated, discuss what they have discovered. Explain that this right is theirs now and they have the responsibility to tell others about it—to educate others.
3. They will tell others by making gifts for other children. These gifts can be delivered to friends, siblings or others on National Child Day to raise awareness about the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The gifts can be drawings, paintings, sculptures or collages of photos that illustrate their assigned right. They should put a simple sentence on their work to describe the right (i.e. You have the right to play!). These gifts can be wrapped and given to someone you know on National Child Day.

**Alternate version:** This activity can be adapted for older children, who can choose a right from the Convention and create gifts by screening t-shirts to represent their right, or other art forms.

Host a child rights film festival for your local community. Ask reps from child rights organizations to speak.





## ACTIVITY:

# RIGHTS EXHIBITION

**Ages: 14–18**      **Time: Several group sessions**

1. Explain that participants (alone, in pairs or in groups) are going to creatively depict one of the articles from the Convention or make a statement about child rights using photography. The resulting collection of photos will be publicly displayed to educate others about child rights.
2. Each participant/pair/group should choose how best to communicate an article from the Convention, a statement about the article or a general statement about child rights in a photo. Participants can use technology to alter the photos graphically or add text. Remind participants that if they wish to photograph children or people they must convey them with dignity and have their permission to take the photograph.
3. Hang completed photos as an exhibition on National Child Day. Invite members from the community, local government, school classes, parents and rights organizations to attend.

***Alternate version:** Choose a different article from the Convention each day. Have groups determine how to represent the article with a photo. As a large group, compare the different ways that the article was expressed.*

## Extension

- Hang the exhibition at the community library or a local art gallery so that it can be viewed by many people.
- Publish the exhibition as a book, magazine or web site.
- Create a traveling exhibition. Arrange to display it in local schools. Develop activities/lessons to accompany the exhibition.
- Publish the photos as postcards and mail them to politicians.
- Print the photos as note cards and sell them.



# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

## You have the right to a name and a record that identifies you as you.

Storytelling is an important tradition in many cultures around the world. Explore the story behind your name. Does it have special meaning? Who gave it to you? Is it short for another name? Tell the story of your name to others. Form a storytelling circle with friends and listen to the stories. Pass around a talking stick to show respect to each storyteller.

## You have the right to a family that cares for you and right to live in a protected environment.

Honour your family and your right to a loving family by learning about your family's history. Ask a grandparent or other family member to share treasured stories, legends and beliefs from your family's history or culture. Start by listening to the story of Claire and her grandfather as he describes the history of her Aboriginal ancestors available at: [www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1303145519542/1535476932510](http://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1303145519542/1535476932510).

## You have the right to give your opinion and for others to listen.

What better way to celebrate your right to an opinion than to exercise it! Debate child rights issues around the dinner table. Initiate a discussion thread about child rights online. (Take a look at the "More information for children" section of [Canada.ca/national-child-day](http://Canada.ca/national-child-day) for information about how to stay safe online).

## You have the right to choose your own friends and groups as long as it does not harm others.

These days it is easy to make friends all over the world. Celebrate your right to choose your own friends by making some new ones! Establish a pen pal relationship with another child somewhere else in the world. Join up with your family, friends or classmates.

## You have the right to be protected from harmful situations.

Recognize your right to protection from harm with a simple "thank you". Send thank you notes or emails to the people who protect you. These people could be your family, your friends, your family doctor, local police officers and firefighters, your Member of Parliament, staff at your local hospital, among many others.

## You have the right to basic needs that include food, shelter, healthcare, education, and information.

Celebrate this right by reaching out to others. There are many families who need support to meet their basic needs. Why not collect food items for your local food bank? Or donate clothing items to a local charity. Try warming a child's new home with a kind gesture—give your extra stuffed animals to a women and children's shelter.

## You have the right to play and rest.

Why not exercise your right to play with a little exercise? Host a sports tournament in the name of child rights for your family and friends or for your local community. You might also consider challenging other local schools to play in the tournament on National Child Day. Have a local professional athlete come and address the group. Ask them to talk about how having this right as a child made a difference in their life.



# GENERATION GO

Impressed by young people that stand up for the rights of others? Get jazzed about youth activists? GO join them.

There are more youth in the world today than ever before. Young people make up almost half the earth's population—that's about 3 billion people. Imagine if you all spoke out together? The impact would be deafening! The generation before you laid a solid foundation for child rights in the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. GO build on that foundation. GO tell every child you know about their rights. GO challenge the child rights violations around you.

GO seek out the inspirational examples of young people championing their rights and advocating for the rights of others. Get up and GO!

## GO Fill Your Head

**Rights Pictionary** – Brush up on the articles of the Convention with a friendly game of Pictionary. Make teams and have one person from each team draw the same article from the Convention at the same time. The first team to guess the right article wins the point!

**Which Rights?** – Read news articles to find a story where a child's rights are being ignored, violated or denied. Use the Convention to identify the rights violations in the story. Craft a letter to the editor, or to a relevant organization/person associated with the story. Use the letter to suggest actions to better protect the rights of the children in the story.

**Performing Rights** – Work in groups to perform skits, tableaux or plays to act out a scenario where a child's rights are violated. Encourage participation from the audience. Discuss which rights are being violated and what could be done to resolve the situation. Suggest that audience members step into the play and act out the potential solutions.

## GO Get Loud

**Read All About It!** – Try this activity to create a buzz and educate others about child rights. Create interesting newspaper headlines about child rights that convey the messages you want to communicate. Post some of them in spots around your school or community centre where people wouldn't expect to see them. This builds curiosity and gets people thinking. Then a few days later (e.g. on National Child Day) spread out in the halls and shout the headlines while handing out the stories that explain them to people who pass by.

**People Power** – Trace the outline of each of your group members on large pieces of paper. Decorate these paper people and write inside "I have the right to..." for each article of the Convention. Hang these paper people on the walls to educate others about their rights.

**Children's Wear** – Throw a t-shirt decorating party. Design t-shirts for a child rights awareness-raising campaign. Research the t-shirts to make sure no children were exploited in their making. Choose a day to launch your campaign (such as National Child Day) and don your new child rights wear.



## GO Stir It Up

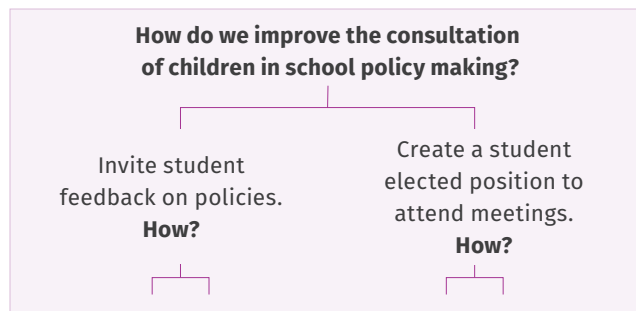
**Graffiti Wall** – Paper a wall and invite your school or local community to contribute thoughts, quotes, musings, challenges, drawings, etc. on child rights.

**Survey Says** – Do a survey to evaluate the child rights climate of your school or local community. Design a questionnaire that asks respondents to evaluate how accurately statements describe their school/community. Give statements like “no one in our school is disciplined unfairly” or “all students are safe from discrimination”. Devise a creative way to share the results of the survey. Then host a public debate on the issues raised by the survey results. Devise resolutions for the identified rights concerns.

**Sacred Circle** – Draw inspiration from Indigenous communities, where consensus, respect and inclusiveness are important. Organize a talking circle where all participants sit at the same level, share eye contact and have equal opportunity to speak about a child rights issue. Invite elders from your parents’ and grandparents’ generations to attend and share stories from their childhoods in comparison to children’s realities today. Have there been noticeable changes in the wants and needs of children over the years?

## GO Challenge Injustice

**How Do We Do That?**<sup>2</sup> – Identified some rights violations you want to tackle? Explore possible group actions by asking “How do we do that?” to each brainstormed idea until you form a big chart of possibilities. Work together to choose the best course of action.



**Dear Me** – Write a letter and address it to yourself. Start it with “Dear Me, I commit to...”. Put one person in charge of mailing the letters out after participants have had time to address their commitments or email them if that is preferred. Receive the letter and remember your commitment to child rights! Variation: Create a memory box to hold the commitments of the entire group.

Open the box together at the end of the year and evaluate whether or not commitments have been fulfilled.

**Rights Walkabout** – Grab a clipboard, paper, pen and a copy of the Convention. Do a ‘walkabout’ through your school, community centre or camp. Take note of examples of rights being protected (e.g. opinion boxes – right to voice opinions) and of rights being violated. Record your findings on a ‘Rights Report Card’ and discuss with the school, centre or camp administration. Devise a plan to address any identified rights violations.

<sup>2</sup> This activity was adapted from “How How How,” in *Participation Spice it Up!* by Dynamix Ltd., and Save the Children.

**FOR MORE RESOURCES  
AND ACTIVITIES, PLEASE VISIT  
[Canada.ca/national-child-day](https://Canada.ca/national-child-day)**

