



# TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

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## A TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

## **Teaching Human Rights in New Brunswick: A Teacher's Handbook (2023)**

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Primary Resources	5
Objectives of the Lesson	5
How to use this Guide	6
<b>A. First Steps: Laying the Groundwork</b>	<b>7</b>
Create a Safe Learning Environment	7
Overview of the Topic	7
Definitions	7
<b>B. Warm-up and Brainstorming: Questions for Discussion</b>	<b>10</b>
Questions for Discussion	11
<b>C. Learning Units</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Unit 1: Understanding the <i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i></b>	<b>12</b>
Key Vocabulary	13
Background and Historical Context of the <i>UDHR</i>	14
Meaning of “Universal” in the <i>UDHR</i>	15
Reading the Articles of the <i>UDHR</i>	16
Activities to Teach the <i>UDHR</i>	16
Class or Group Activities on the <i>UDHR</i>	18
<b>Unit 2: John Peters Humphrey – Life and Legacy</b>	<b>20</b>
Key Vocabulary	20
Student Activities	20

<b>Unit 3: Introduction to the New Brunswick <i>Human Rights Act</i></b>	<b>22</b>
Key Vocabulary	22
Student Activities	24
<b>D. Topics for Short Essays or Research Papers</b>	<b>26</b>

# Introduction

This handbook is designed to assist teachers in New Brunswick schools to create a lesson on human rights. The lesson may be included in a course or learning unit at the middle and high-school levels within the existing curricula of Social Studies, Law, Modern History, Political Science, Canadian History, or World Issues.

The lesson teaches basic concepts and principles of human rights in three units. The units introduce students to the background and text of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*; explain how human rights are implemented; showcase the life story of John Peters Humphrey; and give an overview of human rights in New Brunswick.

If teachers cannot use the entire lesson due to curriculum priorities or other constraints, they can integrate its relevant sections and incorporate them as shorter instructional units within their teaching schedules.



## Primary Resources

1. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
2. John Peters Humphrey: Life and Legacy (YouTube video)
3. New Brunswick *Human Rights Act*: Preamble and Section 2.1

## Objectives of the Lesson



At the conclusion of this lesson, students will:

- Understand the background and meaning of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*;
- Know about the life and legacy of John Peters Humphrey of Hampton, New Brunswick;
- Learn basic facts about the New Brunswick *Human Rights Act*;
- Recognize the basic differences between international and national human rights systems;
- Acquire knowledge of core human rights vocabulary, principles, values, and concepts; and
- Connect key human rights ideas with their own lived experiences.

# How to Use This Guide

In addition to its three units, the handbook also contains a preliminary section that will help teachers introduce the lesson, as well as suggested topics for short essays or research projects. The three units are:

**Unit 1:** Understanding the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

**Unit 2:** John Peters Humphrey - Life and Legacy

**Unit 3:** Introduction to the New Brunswick *Human Rights Act*

Each unit includes:

- References to existing SCOs (Specific Curriculum Outcomes) of the New Brunswick Middle and High School curricula that correspond to or sync with the contents of each unit.
- Sections on key vocabulary, definitions of important terms, suggestions for classroom activities, and more.
- Specific suggestions for teachers on instructional strategies and approaches, formatted as notes in italicized text.

**Note:** *Each unit can serve as a cohesive learning module that can be taught independently of the other units. However, there is cross-referencing between the units, and they are connected by the same overarching theme. In that regard, each unit complements the other units and reinforces the principal themes of the lesson.*

# A. First Steps: Laying the Groundwork

**Note:** Teachers can use this section to set the tone of the lesson, outline its frameworks, and introduce preliminary concepts and vocabulary.

## Create a Safe Learning Environment

When teaching about human rights, a safe and supportive classroom environment is particularly important. To ensure that everyone in class feels equally valued and respected, teachers may consider the following:

- Tell the class that it is very important to know and have conversations about human rights and discrimination, but these discussions may be difficult for some persons or make them feel uncomfortable.
- Establish standards of respectful behaviour in the classroom by explaining how to:
  - a. Listen respectfully to different points of view.
  - b. Respect every person's identity, culture, values, and beliefs.
  - c. Respectfully disagree with another person's views.
- Share with students that services and support are available in the school if they experience distress, anxiety, or the need to speak to someone in confidence.

## Overview of the Topic

Teachers can start by introducing the foundational terms of the lesson to help students think about these basic human rights concepts. Teachers may use the following short definitions or add other details, depending on the time they intend to spend on this preliminary section.

## Definitions

**Note:** Teachers can introduce these terms as they deem appropriate, or they can use some of the methods suggested in the "Warm-up and Brainstorming" section below.



A right is a moral or legal entitlement, which allows the right-holder to have something, or it gives a person the freedom to do something or to act in a certain way.

For example, all persons have the right to life, liberty and safety, and all citizens have the right to vote in elections, the right to express their thoughts, or to travel within or outside the country.



## Human rights

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Human rights are rights we all enjoy or have because we are human beings, regardless of our race, nationality, religion, sex, gender identity, body type, etc.

Human rights allow all people to live freely and to be treated with dignity and equality, so that they can reach their potential and participate fully in society. Human rights are enforced by laws, which ensure that everyone's rights are protected and that violations of rights are checked and penalized.



## Responsibility

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Rights come with responsibilities. When we have a right, we also have a responsibility (also called duty) to respect the same rights for others. To enjoy our human rights, we must take responsibility for our actions, and act responsibly toward other people, toward society, the law, and the state.

***Note:** When talking about the following terms, teachers can tell students that these represent core values which should always be kept in mind when discussing or trying to understand human rights.*



## Respect

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A core concept in human rights. It means how we treat other people. The idea of respect derives from or goes back to the “Golden Rule”: Treat others as you want to be treated, a guiding principle of all religions and moral philosophies since ancient times. When we respect others, we pay attention to their thoughts, emotions, and situation/context, which gives them the dignity they deserve as human beings.



## Equality

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Another essential idea in human rights. It means that all persons have equal rights, regardless of differences of race, nationality, sex, class, etc. Equality doesn't mean that everyone should look, act, or think the same way – it recognizes that all of us have different personal traits, but we are equal in the rights that we are entitled to by law and as human beings.





## Dignity

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The essence of human rights. Dignity is the inherent value and worth of a human being. We must treat every person with dignity, simply because they are human beings worthy of respect and empathy. Thus, dignity is not exclusive to certain people because of their status, wealth, or education. It belongs to all human beings equally. When we recognize the inherent dignity of a person, we will treat them with respect. Whenever human dignity is violated, human rights are violated.



## Difference

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Human rights recognize that human beings are different because of biological, social, cultural, political, and other factors, and these differences must be respected. When we respect the difference of others, we promote “diversity” and “inclusion”, two other important human rights values.

# B. Warm-up and Brainstorming: Questions for Discussion

**Note:** Before beginning the units, teachers may use some of the following preliminary questions as discussion points or class activities.

These questions will help teachers assess how much students know about human rights, which areas of human rights they are most interested in, and which aspects of the lesson they would find most relatable in terms of their lived experience or in relation to present-day social, cultural, or political issues that may be of interest to them.

The discussion questions can be structured in different ways, to allow students to reflect on and engage with foundational human rights ideas at the outset of the lesson. For example, teachers could consider the following:



## The Socratic Method

Keep the questions open-ended, invite responses to them, and then round off the responses by providing a succinct conclusion, with a parting thought that stimulates the student's interest in the topic and encourages them to learn more about it.



## Thought Bubble or Venn Diagram

Note key words from each student's response on the whiteboard – the teacher can circle/highlight some responses, and add question marks to others, etc. When all responses are captured on the whiteboard, draw a circle around them, or create a Venn diagram separating, collating, or intersecting the different ideas. Ask the class to remember this diagram for subsequent exercises or activities, or to note how their ideas will evolve as they acquire more knowledge about the different topics of the lesson.



## Pair or Group Work

Break students in pairs or small groups (depending on class size) and let each pair or group discuss the questions and then present their response to the class. Teachers may use the thought bubble method noted above or choose other ways to frame student responses for meaningful instruction.

**Note:** Remind students to take notes during these activities, and that these notes will help them develop their understanding of human rights concepts and track how their thoughts evolve as the lesson progresses.

# Questions for Discussion

- What are human rights? What do you think of human rights or how do you feel about human rights?
- Who has human rights? Are some people or groups excluded from enjoying human rights? If so, why do you think this happens?
- Why should we respect human rights? Would our society be different if human rights were not respected?

- Can you identify specific human rights?

**Note:** The teacher may share a few Articles of the UDHR or the 16 protected grounds in the New Brunswick Human Rights Act to prompt students to think about specific rights.

- Is there a human right or a set of rights that you as a person identify with?

**Note:** Teachers may tell students that they do not have to respond to this question if speaking about it makes them uncomfortable.

- Can you give an example of a situation when someone's human rights were violated? The example can be from real life or from a book, movie, or TV show.
- How can societies ensure that human rights are protected? What can you as an individual do to promote respect for human rights?

**Note:** The teacher may like to point students to the following page on the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission's website: [What can you do to support human rights](#)

- Who looks after human rights? Who would protect or enforce human rights if these rights are violated or not respected?

**Note:** The teacher may speak of human rights commissions and mention that the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission promotes and protects human rights in New Brunswick.

- Share with students the following quote by Eleanor Roosevelt to help them reflect where rights reside, the horizon or range of human rights, and how rights are interwoven with individual or personal lives:

“Where, after all do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home, so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.”

**Note:** The teacher may ask students if they think that their neighbourhood or school is their entire “world”, as the above quotation suggests, and how would they feel if their rights were not respected in these private spheres.

# C. Learning Units

## Unit 1: Understanding the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

**Note:** Instructional components of this unit may be integrated with the following courses and SCOs in the current NB school curriculum.

### *Social Studies 6: World Cultures*

- 6.5.2: Examine specific examples of human rights issues around the world

### *Social Studies 9: Canadian Identities*

- 3.1: Rights and responsibilities of citizenship (local, national, and global)

### *Law 120*

- SCO 2.5: Human rights in international law and under federal and provincial regimes

### *Modern History 110*

- SCO 2.3: End of conflicts and how governments achieve collective security
- SCO 3.2: International responses to genocide

### *Political Science 120*

- SCO 2.4: How governments function in the international community
- SCO 3.1: Rights, responsibilities, roles, and status of individuals and groups in Canada

### *Canadian History 120*

- SCO 4.2: Social and political developments in post-war Canada
- SCO 4.3: Impact of globalization on Canada and its peoples

### *World Issues 120*

- SCO 1.3: Cross-cultural awareness and understanding of identity, diversity, and unity
- SCO 3.3: Causes, consequences, and solutions to violations of a group or individual's human rights

**Note:** Teachers can distribute a printed copy of the text of the UDHR and/or display it in a PPT slide or from a website, for example the OHCHR page: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english>

A printable UDHR poster to share with students or display in the classroom is also available here: [0444193\\_poster.indd \(ohchr.org\)](https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english).

# 1.1 Key Vocabulary

World War II, The Holocaust, Atomic Bomb, United Nations, Law, International Law, National/Provincial Law, International Conventions or Covenants

**Note:** Depending on how teachers wish to pace or sequence the contents of this unit, they may use some of the following definitions to introduce its key vocabulary.



## United Nations

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An international organisation that was founded in 1945 by governments of the world with the aim to promote global peace, security, and human rights. All countries or nation states of the world are members of the UN.



## Law

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A set of rules that regulate the conduct of people and society in a nation, province, or municipality/city, with penalties or consequences for their violation.



## International Law

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Rules, principles, and practices that govern relations between nations, set by international organizations like the UN to regulate issues like war, diplomacy, trade/commerce, and human rights, etc.

**Note:** Teachers can explain to students that most international law is written in international documents, which are variously called “instruments”, “conventions”, “covenants”, “declarations” or “treaties”.

*Under international law, all international instruments are not legally binding on states. For example, declarations like the UDHR do not have binding legal effect, but they have persuasive moral authority, and they set standards of conduct, behaviours, and processes that guide states in their conduct.*

*Treaties, covenants, and conventions are legally binding on states that sign or ratify them, and these states must obey or apply the provisions and rules of these documents in their domestic laws.*

**Note:** The term “domestic law” refers to laws that apply within a country in which these laws are introduced or written, as opposed to international law, which applies to all or most nations of the world. For example, in Canada, the federal government passes laws that apply to federal areas and entities, and each province and territory has its own set of laws. These are Canada’s domestic laws, because they apply only within Canada or in Canadian provinces and territories.

*Therefore, while the UDHR is not itself enforceable as a law, its principles have been adopted in national constitutions and laws that are enforceable as domestic laws in those countries.*



# International Human Rights Conventions or Covenants

Documents written by UN bodies like the UN Human Rights Council with consultation from nation states and setting down human rights codes of conduct. States that sign these documents must introduce the protections enshrined in them in their domestic laws.

**Note:** As an example, teachers may tell students about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which obligates states to protect the rights of children. States that have signed the CRC, like Canada, must protect those rights through its domestic laws.

If at some stage in the unit, teachers want to tell students about the other international human rights covenants adopted by the UN since the UDHR, these principal international human rights covenants are listed below – years in parenthesis indicate when these documents were adopted by the UN:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
- Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990)
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

## 1.2 Background and Historical Context of the UDHR

**Note:** The following is a brief snapshot of the background and historical context of the UDHR. To add more details, teachers can use resources provided on the webpage of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission: <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/nbhrc/education-and-engagement/john-peters-humphrey.html>

Following the devastation of the Second World War, governments of the world came together in 1945 to form the United Nations (UN), an international organisation dedicated to upholding global peace and security. On December 10, 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*, a document that sets down fundamental human rights and recognizes that these human rights belong equally to all people of the world.

The *UDHR* has been endorsed by all countries that are members of the UN. In addition, many countries, including Canada, have included its guiding principles in their national laws or constitutions. In this way, protections granted in the *UDHR* have entered domestic laws and have been guaranteed to citizens in countries around the world.

The *UDHR* has thirty Articles, each of which includes a right or set of rights, including civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech, and privacy, and economic, social, and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health, and education.



# 1.3 Meaning of “Universal” in the UDHR



The word “**universal**” in the *UDHR* implies that the human rights included in it are available to all persons everywhere, globally, in all nations and societies, without regard to people’s race, religion, language, gender, etc.

**Note:** Teachers can ask students to think about the idea of universality and if human rights can be truly universal. They may give the example of education. Is the right to education a universal right equally available to every global citizen?

Because all global citizens cannot benefit from the “universal” right to education, teachers can use this discussion to introduce the difference between the “aspiration” and “actualization” of laws – i.e. how rights are articulated, as in the *UDHR*, and how they are actually implemented in states and societies in real terms.

Students can think about the idea of universality by sharing their own thoughts and examples of a universal right that interests them from the list of rights in the *UDHR*.



**Note:** If teachers want to spend more time discussing the idea of universality, they could consider class or group discussions around some of the following prompts:

- In your opinion, what are the core values that make human rights universal, despite the cultural, national, religious, linguistic and other differences between people worldwide?
- Why do you think it's essential for the international community to promote and protect human rights universally?
- What barriers or challenges (political, economic, cultural, etc.) prevent the recognition of human rights universally across the world? What steps or strategies do you think can effectively address these challenges?
- Do you believe that cultural and other contextual factors should be considered when applying universal human rights principles in different regions or societies of the world?
- Imagine you are an advocate for human rights on a global level. What actions or initiatives would you undertake to promote universal human rights and why?

## 1.4 Reading the Articles of the UDHR



Teachers can devise their own method for familiarizing students with the Articles of the UDHR. This can be done by pair or group activities, or by assigning different Articles to students, giving them time to reflect, and then inviting them to share their thoughts on the Articles with the class.

**Note:** Teachers may choose to spend more time on certain Articles than others, depending on their assessment of class interest, the average age of the class, and the relevance of an Article in terms of current issues or student interest.

Once a general introduction to the text of the UDHR has been made, teachers can use some of the following activities to emphasize some of the Articles and the UDHR's main themes.

## 1.5 Activities to Teach the UDHR



### Key Words of Article 1

Article 1 begins with, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Ask students to pick key words in this sentence and explain what they mean to them. Emphasize the concepts of “freedom”, “equality”, “dignity”, and “rights” set down at the outset in this opening Article of the UDHR.



### Article 1 Compared

Compare the wording of Article 1 (“all human beings are born free”) with usage in the US Declaration of Independence (“all men are created equal”). Do these different expressions potentially impact the meaning and scope of rights in the two documents?



### “Difference” in Article 2

Read Article 2 with the class – what does it teach us about “difference” and how to respect the difference of others. How many “differences” are named in the Article? Teachers can refer students to the definition of “difference” introduced at the beginning of the lesson.





## What's My Article?

Divide students into teams. Each team selects an Article, thinks up a key word on the Article, and writes a sentence about it. A team reads out its word and sentence, and the other teams guess which Article they are referring to. Teachers may choose to do this activity toward the end of the unit, when students are familiar with all or most of the Articles.

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## Where is the Right?

Name a right, e.g. “freedom of opinion or religion”, “freedom from discrimination”, or “rights to privacy”, etc., and ask the class to identify the Article that protects that right. This activity can similarly be done in pairs, groups, or competing teams.

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## My Favorite Article and Why

Students choose their favourite Article and discuss if the rights mentioned in that Article are respected and guaranteed in their community. If not, what are the challenges that prevent these rights from being fully realized?

**Note:** Teachers may ask students to think of institutions or social structures that can grant or withhold their favourite right: e.g. family, school, community, municipality/city, province, country.

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## My Favorite Article – continued

Students write the title of their favourite Article, define its important vocabulary, and explain the Article in their own words and why it is important to them.

# 1.6 Class or Group Activities on the UDHR



## Human Rights Scrapbook

After reading the *UDHR*, students begin a class scrapbook entitled, Human Rights Are \_\_\_\_ . All students, the teacher, and visitors to class contribute to the book. A space may be designated in the classroom as Human Rights Corner where the scrapbook may be displayed. Students can continue to display other significant materials or artifacts in this space as the lesson progresses through its three units.



## Class Human Rights Charter

As students develop their understanding of the various Articles of the *UDHR*, they can start to write a Class Human Rights Charter, a working document that gets refined as the lesson continues.

**Note:** The teacher can set the scope of the Class Charter, i.e. whether it would just entail how students will behave or act in class or whether it would also amalgamate the broader set of rights that students have studied in this unit.



## Word Map

Students create a word map of human rights terms taken from the *UDHR*, adding their synonyms and definitions, writing sentences using these key terms, or representing these concepts in illustrations, etc. These word maps can be made into a collage and displayed in the Human Rights Corner.



## Personalized UDHR Version

The class or students working in groups develop a personalized, user-friendly version of the *UDHR*, explaining each right in their own words. If different versions are developed, all groups can work together to prepare a final version for display in the Human Rights Corner.



## Human Rights Glossary

The class develops its own glossary of key human rights terms to be showcased in the Human Rights Corner. The glossary can evolve as students learn more human rights terms and concepts in the lesson's three units.



## Articles Missing from UDHR

The class works in groups to think of a right or a set of rights that are not mentioned in the *UDHR*. If students think that a right must be added to the *UDHR*, they must justify or make an argument in support of their choice.

**Note:** Teachers could tell students that they can present their suggested additions as amendments to the *UDHR*, or they could name their document “A *UDHR* for the 21st Century”.

*For this exercise, prompt students to think about new rights in the context of the current state of their communities, the province, Canada, or the world as a whole, and to think of rights related to contemporary issues like climate change, digital media, surveillance and privacy, and scientific breakthroughs in genetics, artificial intelligence, etc.*



## Drafting a Consensus UDHR

As follow up to the previous exercise, students divide in groups and each group drafts a version of the *UDHR*, including 10-15 human rights they believe are essential to uphold dignity, respect, and equality in contemporary times. Each group presents their version to the class, after which the class must reach consensus on a final *UDHR* draft of 10-15 human rights representing the values of all participants. This may involve compromise and negotiation.

**Note:** The teacher may wrap up this exercise by inviting students to share their thoughts and insights about this exercise, the challenges and rewards of drafting human rights documents, and the role of diplomacy in such processes.

# Unit 2: John Peters Humphrey – Life and Legacy

**Note:** Instructional components of this unit can be integrated with the following courses and SCOs in the current NB school curriculum.

Social Studies 6: World Cultures

- 6.5.2: Examine specific examples of human rights issues around the world

Social Studies 9: Canadian Identities

- 3.1: Rights and responsibilities of citizenship (local, national, and global)

Law 120

- SCO 2.5: Human rights in international law and under federal and provincial regimes

**Note:** Explain to the students that in this unit they will focus on the life story of a local human rights hero, trace his life from childhood to later years, and use that story as an example of how an individual can rise above personal loss to champion the rights of others, and create long-lasting impact and a legacy of hope and progress.

## 2.1 Key Vocabulary

Biography, Intellectual Biography, United Nations, International Law

**Note:** Watch the JPH video with your class and use the following activities to engage with students:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2gEsP8SeoM>

For complementary materials on Humphrey's life and achievements, teachers may refer students to the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission's dedicated John Peters Humphrey webpage:

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/nbhrc/education-and-engagement/john-peters-humphrey.html>



John Peters Humphrey, 1948 (courtesy of UN/Kari Berggray)

## 2.2 Student Activities



### Enacting a Play

Students work as a group to adapt John Peters Humphrey's life story into a short play to be enacted before the class or at a school event. The teacher may assign roles to students as script writers, actors, director, backstage, stage design, etc.

## Short Story Writing



Students use the facts of Humphrey's life to write a short story about him, with descriptions of places, scenery, setting, and with principal characters, dialogues, etc. They may choose one phase of Humphrey's life, e.g. his childhood years in Hampton, or his UN career, to keep the plot or storyline compact and to emphasize the significance of that period in Humphrey's life.

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## Newspaper Article



Students convert Humphrey's story into a newspaper article or an article for the school magazine. In this and the previous activity, students can learn the different writing styles of fiction and reportage. For the newspaper or magazine article, they can use the standard cues, i.e. Who, When, Where, What, Why, and How, to develop their content.

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## Postcard from John



Students write a postcard written by Humphrey to a close friend or family member. Students can use their imagination to play with the theme of the postcard and the time when it is written. For example, the postcard could be imagined as being written in present times, expressing Humphrey's thoughts on human rights in today's world, or it could be dated from a time in Humphrey's life, after the adoption of the *UDHR*, for instance, and expressing his hopes for human rights in the future.

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## John's Diary



Students create a diary entry written by Humphrey in his journal. As in the previous activity, they can play with the timeline of the journal entry. For example, they can imagine that Humphrey is living in present times and reflecting on the state of human rights today. Students can also develop contrasting entries, showing how the tone and content may be different if written during Humphrey's lifetime and in the present.

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## Letter to John



Students write a postcard or letter to Humphrey, telling him about their human rights experience in the present times, or expressing anything they feel like, based on their knowledge of his life and legacy and their own lived experience of human rights.

# Unit 3: Introduction to the New Brunswick *Human Rights Act*

**Note:** Instructional components of this unit may be integrated with the following courses and SCOs in the current NB school curriculum.

## *Social Studies 6: World Cultures*

- 6.5.2: Examine specific examples of human rights issues around the world

## *Social Studies 9: Canadian Identities*

- 3.1: Rights and responsibilities of citizenship (local, national, and global)

## *Canadian History 120*

- SCO 4.2: Social and political developments in post-war Canada

## *Law 120*

- SCO 2.5: Human rights in international law and under federal and provincial regimes

## *Political Science 120*

- SCO 3.1: Rights, responsibilities, roles, and status of individuals and groups in Canada

## *World Issues 120*

- SCO 1.3: Cross-cultural awareness and understanding of identity, diversity, and unity
- SCO 3.3: Causes, consequences, and solutions to violations of a group or individual's human rights

**Note:** Start this unit by sharing copies of the Preamble and Section 2.1 of the New Brunswick Human Rights Act with the class.

## 3.1 Key Vocabulary

Human Rights Commissions, Federal or National Laws, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Jurisdiction, Provincial Laws, *Human Rights Act*, Discrimination, Grounds and Areas of Discrimination



### Human Rights Commissions

These are government agencies in each province, territory, and federal area, and their function is to promote and protect human rights in their jurisdictions.



## Human Rights Acts

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Each province and territory in Canada, and the federal government, has its own Human Rights Act, a law that protects vulnerable individuals or groups against discrimination. The New Brunswick *Human Rights Act (HRA)* contains 16 protected grounds.



## Grounds

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The 16 grounds in the *HRA* represent personal characteristics, i.e. personal traits that human beings identify with. For example, a person may belong to a certain race (e.g. Black), have a national origin (e.g. Mexico), be of a certain age (e.g. 70 years old), have a mental disability (e.g. depression), identify with a sex (e.g. woman), identify with or express a certain gender (e.g. 2SLGBTQI+), etc. The *HRA* protects all these persons against discrimination in certain areas.

**Note:** Teachers can tell the students that the *HRA* also protects all persons from sexual harassment and reprisal.



## Areas

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The *HRA* protects people against discrimination in the following areas: employment, housing, services, advertisements and publicity, and memberships in certain organizations, etc.

**Note:** When explaining areas, teachers can explain that the *HRA* does not protect against criminal acts (which are protected under criminal law) and also does not protect or enforce Charter rights, i.e. rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.



## Jurisdiction

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In law, jurisdiction means the geographical or other limits within which a law is applicable. For example, the *HRA* is a provincial law, which means that it applies or protects against acts of discrimination only if these acts take place within the province of New Brunswick. Similarly, each province or territory has its own Human Rights Act, which only applies within that particular province or territory.



## Discrimination

Discrimination is a core idea in human rights law. Discrimination is said to take place when someone is treated differently because they identify with a protected ground (e.g. race, sex, gender identity or expression), and the different treatment causes disadvantage to that person in a protected area like employment, housing, or services, etc. If a person suffers discrimination in New Brunswick, they can file a complaint with the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

### 3.2 Student Activities

- Compare the preamble of the *Human Rights Act (HRA)* with the preamble of the *UDHR*. Students can identify common vocabulary used in both preambles and note differences in emphasis and scope.

**Note:** Teachers can use this exercise to reinforce the concept of jurisdiction by showing how, as stated in their respective preambles, the *HRA* applies only to the province of New Brunswick, whereas the *UDHR* is global in scope.

- Review the 16 grounds enumerated in Section 2.1 of the *HRA* and compare how many are mentioned in the *UDHR*. Students may draw a comparative table to highlight the similarities and differences in the enumerated grounds in both documents.
- Break students in groups and allocate a ground or set of grounds to each group. The groups discuss their allocated grounds, what do they mean and represent, what is their scope, examples of persons who would identify with them, etc.

**Note:** Teachers can use this exercise to remind students how each ground represents a personal characteristic, i.e. it is intimately connected to a person's sense of self or identity.

- Share with students the definition of sexual harassment (Section 10(1) of the *HRA*) and ask for their feedback on its wording.

**Note:** In this activity, teachers can emphasize that, according to the definition, both “vexatious comments” and “conduct” can constitute sexual harassment, and that this behaviour is “unwelcome” to the victim. When discussing “unwelcomeness”, teachers can talk about the idea of “consent” – i.e. when conduct is unwelcome, it is always without consent.

- Teachers can similarly explain the meaning of reprisal (Section 11 of the *HRA*). Tell students that the *HRA* protects persons who face discrimination if they report a human rights issue or help with a human rights complaint.
- Students draw a flow chart showing how human rights laws flow from international instruments to national and provincial laws. This could be a class project for display in the Human Rights Corner.



- Students select a ground or right from Section 2.1 of the *HRA* (race, disability, religion, etc.) and research its history, meaning, and scope. They could look up the latest Annual Report of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission to see the number of complaints filed per year under their selected ground and create an infographic based on their findings.
- Students reflect on a ground or set of grounds that they believe is missing from the *HRA* and make an argument for adding that ground through a legislative amendment.

**Note:** Teachers can prompt students to compare the list of protected grounds included in the Human Rights Acts of other provinces or territories in Canada to get a sense of other grounds that may not be included in the *HRA*.

*To make this exercise more elaborate, teachers can ask students to do a jurisdictional scan of all the Human Rights Acts in Canada, comparing the grounds in all Human Rights Acts in Canada and presenting this material in MS Word table format.*

# D. Topics for Short Essays or Research Papers

**Note:** Depending on how the teacher has planned or paced the three learning units, the following topics can be structured as group activities culminating in class presentations or as research essays written by individual students.

The topics are conceived as final assignments of the lesson, but teachers can incorporate them at any stage of the lesson, with modifications based on their priorities and learning goals.



## Historical survey

In what ways was the *UDHR* a response to the past (i.e., how does it reflect the historical moment when it was written)? In what ways does it pass on a responsibility to future generations?

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## Historical survey

Research other human rights documents in history and provide their brief context, contents, and historical impact; for example, the Code Of Hammurabi, Magna Carta, US Declaration of Independence, Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, etc. Students could do a comparative study of two of these documents or compare one of them with the *UDHR*.

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## Historical survey

Research a religion, philosophy, or ancient culture in history whose teachings or main thought included respect for and protection of human rights.

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## Textual analysis

Students compare the three drafts of the *UDHR* written by John Peters Humphrey to identify similarities and differences between them, and to show how the final *UDHR* document changed or stayed the same compared to these early drafts. Students can make a PPT presentation featuring the drafts and highlighting the findings of their analysis.



## Reflective journal

Students keep a journal tracing their learning journey through each learning unit, to be submitted at the end of the lesson.

**Note:** *If students are interested in this assignment, teachers should assign it early in the lesson, so students can document their thoughts as each instructional unit is taught.*



## Reflective essay

At the end of the lesson, students write a reflective essay focused on the following idea: “Three things I learned about human rights, and three things I am still curious about”.



## Reflective essay

Students write a reflective essay on the topic: “How will I celebrate Human Rights Day and why?”



## Biographical essay

Students think of a prominent human rights leader or activist from history or the present day and describe his or her contributions in advancing human rights. Students could describe how this person’s life inspires them to appreciate and uphold the values of human rights.



## Flow chart

Students create a flow chart showing the *UDHR* and other international instruments, with short description of each instrument, its year of adoption, and the year it was ratified by Canada. Each instrument can have short descriptions, e.g. by following cues like What, When, Why, Who, How, etc.



## Human rights in practice

Students research a human right mentioned in the *UDHR* and study a location or country of the world where that right is being violated. The research should aim to raise awareness about the issue and propose potential solutions.

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## Human rights in practice

Students reflect on human rights issues within their school and local community to determine which rights enumerated in the *UDHR* or the *HRA* are being honoured and which require more attention, awareness, or protection.



## Contact Us

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