

History and Citizenship 4: Sexual Diversity in Canadian History (Part 1)

Course

History and Citizenship Cycle 1

Unit/Social Phenomenon/Theme

A Social Phenomenon of the Present

Lesson and Focus

Sexual Diversity in Canadian History

Trigger Warning

Research and discussion containing violence or discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity. Students might encounter derogatory terms in research due to historical context. Outside of this, derogatory terms used in discussion or assignments must be addressed immediately.

Aim/Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is that students will learn about sexual orientation and identity, and the adoption of respectful attitudes towards various sexual orientations. Students will explore the history of how different sexual orientations and sexual minorities have been treated.

Competencies

1. Examines social phenomena from a historical perspective.
2. Interprets social phenomena using the historical method.
3. Constructs their consciousness of citizenship through the study of history.

Materials

- Computer lab
- Internet access
- White/chalk board and markers

Central Concepts

Society, Change, Continuity, Democracy, Diversity, Stakes, Territory

Hook

Establish group rules and norms, the teacher needs to ensure students will be respectful and to highlight the damaging potential of words and bullying.

* If there are any problems with language used by the class, address them immediately. Make it clear that any hateful or derogatory language is unacceptable in your classroom.

Development/Teaching Methods

1. The teacher will write the word “orientation” on the board, ask what the word means, and records class answers. The teacher will add the word ‘sexual’ in front of it and repeat the activity. Suggested definition: “the direction of one’s sexual attraction.”
2. This activity should be repeated with the words “behaviour” and “identity” to form the phrases “sexual behaviour” and “sexual identity.”
 - Reinforce that behaviour is not necessarily dependent on orientation.
 - Suggested Definition:
 - Sexual identity: How a person chooses to describe themselves with respect to sex.
 - Explain that the words for someone’s chosen identity are fluid and can change over time. These are words that people choose for themselves in order to “self-identify”.
 - Stress that identity is not necessarily determined by orientation or behaviour.
 - **Just because someone has same sex attractions or engages in activity with someone of the same sex, this does not mean that they identify as queer or gay.**
 - Ask the class for some examples of sexual orientations: (gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, queer)
 - Discuss which orientations have been historically acceptable and what the word acceptable means. Discussion questions:
 - Which of the above-mentioned orientations, behaviours and identities have been acceptable in history and largely in our society today?
 - There are thriving communities of people with historically-non-normative sexual orientations all around us (*Teacher can pose the question, “does heterosexual identity necessarily limit sexual activity to the insertion of a penis into a vagina?” Ultimately, there are many types sexual behaviour available to people of all sexual orientations—far beyond the stereotypes*).
 - Discuss how much of history is revised by those who write it. Can historical content be changed based on the perspectives, values and biases of its writers?

Culmination (20 min)

- Divide the class into pairs or small groups.
- Students will pick a period in Canadian (or world) history and a specific group to focus on.
- Some examples are:
 - Two spirited people in Indigenous cultures
 - Homosexuality in New France or English Canada
 - Changes in the law in Canada up to the 1950s
 - Students can find this information online. Blogs can be helpful, specifically <http://thedrummersrevenge.wordpress.com/>

Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson:

- Students will be able to define sexual behavioural, sexual orientation, and sexual identity.
- Students will have a greater understanding of historically accepted and rejected sexual orientations around the world.
- Students will have exercised group work and discussion skills.
- Students will have exercised critical thinking skills.

Assessment Ideas

- 1) From their choice, pairs of students will write a 1-page description of the event/issue, discuss their findings and why it made it into the public record. Students will also discuss the language that was used to describe these moments in history, both by the present day historian and the recorded evidence from the time. How did people at the time describe orientation? Did they describe it differently than, or separately from, various other behaviours or identities?

This paper can be handed in to the teacher to read for appropriateness and to address any concerns/misconceptions of the class during the next class.



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