

Fairness Week Contest

Curriculum Tie-ins and Suggested Topics

Participate in Fairness Week and work through the curriculum at the same time!

Following are curricula excerpts from:

Grade 9 Social Studies

Social Studies 10, 20 & 30

Law 30

History 10, 20 & 30

Just look for the pages relevant to your classes. Each section explains how ombudsman work ties into the curriculum and suggests topics for the contest.

Grade 9 Social Studies

Curriculum Tie-ins

Unit Two – Change

Topic Eleven: The Growth of a New Worldview

Learning Objectives

- ↳ **Knowledge/Content** “Know that individuals in every society have to reach a general agreement about what is acceptable and unacceptable.”

The Ombudsman Tie-in: Parliamentary ombudsman offices exist in many countries around the world. Typically, they take complaints from citizens about government actions, determine what is fair, and make recommendations about what the government should do to correct unfair situations. The kind of work an ombudsman office does in a country often reflects the issues that society is struggling with – how they are trying to change and what they think is acceptable or unacceptable.

Note: A parliamentary ombudsman is an ombudsman appointed by a parliament, sometimes also known as a government ombudsman.

Suggested Contest Topics

- ***What is Fairness?*** How do ombudsman offices decide what fairness means? When someone complains about an unfairness, how would an ombudsman find out if what happened was fair or unfair? If an ombudsman decides the government was unfair, what happens next? Find an example or story from an ombudsman website about a complaint, what the ombudsman did and how it ended.

Research Tips: Some ombudsman offices put information about fairness on their websites. At Ombudsman Saskatchewan (www.ombudsman.sk.ca), check out the “Fine Art of Fairness Workbook” and “Fairness: A Brief Explanation.” Ombudsman offices often put stories and examples in their annual reports and these are usually posted online.

- ***Fairness in _____ and _____*** Choose two different places in the world and compare the work of the parliamentary ombudsman in both places. What kinds of complaints are people taking to each ombudsman? Give examples. How do these examples show the issues that each society is dealing with? What kinds of ideas may be changing?

Research Tips: Search online for different ombudsman offices and look at their annual reports for stories about the complaints people have brought them. Another way to find stories about issues at different ombudsman offices is to search news websites such as www.reuters.com.

Social Studies 10

Curriculum Tie-ins

Unit One – Political Decision Making

From the Unit Overview: “Democratic societies have created social organizations which encourage people to use the skills of bargaining, compromise, and conciliation to work out their relationships.”

- ✎ **From “Reconciling Individuality with Interdependence”:** “Know that societies have to work out a balance between the privileges and the responsibilities of one group with the well being and contributions of other groups.”
- ✎ **From “Power and Decision Making in Society”:** “ All social organizations must establish some method of dealing with power”
- ✎ **From “The Resolution of Conflict”:** “There are a number of mechanisms societies may use to resolve disputes: mediation & arbitration...”
“Mediation: Know that mediation involves an individual or group that intervenes in a conflict and works with both sides to help them negotiate an agreement.”
- ✎ **From “The Role of Government in Modern Democratic Societies”:** “ Governments must supervise and resolve conflicts which inevitably arise among private interests and between private interests and government.”

Note: These are only some of the curriculum areas that have a logical connection to ombudsman work. There are more in this unit and in Unit Three – Ideology and the Decision Making Process and Unit Five – International Political Organizations. For all curriculum links to ombudsman work, use the Ministry of Education’s online curriculum search function and type in “ombudsman”.

The Ombudsman Tie-in: Parliamentary ombudsmen help ensure that government services are fair. In Saskatchewan, these services include health care, social services, and Crown corporations such as SGI, SaskTel and SaskPower. When people believe that they have been treated unfairly by a government service, they need a way to resolve this conflict. The Saskatchewan Ombudsman is independent and impartial and can investigate, negotiate or mediate to reach a solution. He can make recommendations to government about how the conflict should be resolved.

Note: A parliamentary ombudsman is an ombudsman appointed by a parliament, sometimes also known as a government ombudsman.

Suggested Contest Topics

- ***Fairness Across Canada***: What does it mean to be a provincial or territorial parliamentary ombudsman in Canada? Compare the nine offices across the country. What kinds of complaints do they take? What options do they use for dealing with complaints? If an ombudsman finds that a situation is unfair, how does he or she convince government to make changes? What powers and approaches appear similar among these offices? What is different?

Research Tips: You can search for Canadian ombudsman offices online. Once you find one, check the links page for connections to more Canadian ombudsman websites.

- ***A FAIR Resolution***: When a government ombudsman receives a complaint of unfairness, how does he or she determine what happened and what is fair? Use a real life example from each of four government ombudsman offices from anywhere in the world. (That's four examples all together.) Each example should illustrate one of the following: investigation of one person's complaint, investigation into an issue that affects many people, negotiation or mediation, and a quick resolution (one where the government quickly agreed to make a change even before the investigation, negotiation or mediation was complete).

Research Tips: Search online for different ombudsman offices and look for information about how they resolve complaints. Look at their annual reports for stories about the complaints people have brought them and how these were resolved.

Social Studies 20

Curriculum Tie-ins

Unit One – Human Rights

↪ **From “Introduction to Foundational Skills of the Course”:** “The skills/abilities foundational objectives of this course will help students learn to:

1. evaluate different points of view using dialectical thinking;
2. use problem-solving techniques to clearly define a problem and possible solutions to it;
3. use decision-making procedures to define a need for a decision and a plan to implement that decision.
4. use conflict-resolution procedures to reduce antagonisms which interfere with the problem-solving and decision-making processes.”

↪ **From “Dialectical Thinking”:** “Know that the effective use of problem solving, dialectical reasoning, decision making, and conflict resolution requires the ability to plan, manage, and evaluate one’s learning experiences by asking and answering fundamental questions such as:

- What is this all about?
- What would be the best way of solving this?
- How can I generate a list of the different alternatives possible in a situation?
- Would this way be better than that way?
- Is this approach getting me what I want?
- Do I like the results I'm getting?
- Am I really doing the right problem or is the problem something else?”

↪ **From “Democratic Moral Vision”:** “Know that the basic principles of liberalism mean that the power of the state must always be controlled and limited so that it serves the needs of the individual.”

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The Ombudsman Tie-in: Parliamentary ombudsmen help ensure that government services are fair and that individuals have a way of resolving conflicts with government. Ombudsman offices receive complaints from the public about unfairness in government services. Ombudsman offices frequently use investigative and conflict resolution skills in responding to these complaints. Throughout the world, ombudsman offices usually have some connection to human rights, and the kinds of issues they deal with vary from country to country.

Note: A parliamentary ombudsman is an ombudsman appointed by a parliament, sometimes also known as a government ombudsman.

Suggested Contest Topics

- ***The Fairness Lens:*** How do parliamentary ombudsman offices look at fairness? What is their process when they receive complaints about unfairness in government? What kinds of questions do they ask so they can find out what really happened and how it could be resolved? Why is it important for an ombudsman to be impartial (not taking sides)?

Research Tips: Some ombudsman offices share general information about what they mean by fairness and how they do their work. Ombudsman Saskatchewan, for example, has a resource for Teachers and Students called "Under the Fairness Lens" that may be useful. Some other ombudsman websites that may be helpful in this area include those in Canada, the UK and Australia.

- ***Human Rights in Ombudsman Work:*** What kinds of human rights issues do parliamentary ombudsman offices deal with in Canada compared to the rest of the world? Compare issues that a Canadian ombudsman office deals with and those in three other countries. What do these examples tell us about the advancement of human rights in these locations?

Research Tips: Search online for different ombudsman offices and look at their annual reports for stories about the complaints people have brought them. Another way to find stories about issues at different ombudsman offices worldwide is to search news websites such as www.reuters.com.

Social Studies 30

Curriculum Tie-ins

Unit One – Change

- ↪ From **“Dialectical Evaluation”**: “Know that dialectical evaluation is the process of:
- defining relevant viewpoints within the information;
 - testing the viewpoints for factual accuracy;
 - testing the viewpoints for their morality;
 - evaluating the factual and moral testing; and,
 - forming a conclusion about the issues.”
- ↪ From **“Implementing Change Within a Democratic Society”**: “How does society decide whether to implement a change? Many debates about a change become a dialectic with powerful and cogent arguments supporting each side of the dialectic. Then the problem becomes a question of deciding who is correct? On what basis should the decision be made? Who has the burden of proof: those opposed to or those in favour of change?”

Unit Three – Culture

- ↪ From **“Democracy”**: “Know that criteria commonly defining a democratic approach to government are: public officials must be accountable for their decisions and policies...”

Unit Four – Governance

- ↪ From **“Welfare”**: “Know that the welfare of those who do not have power is dependent upon the political, legal, and judicial systems which limit and hold accountable those who have power.”

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The Ombudsman Tie-in: Parliamentary ombudsmen hold public officials accountable for the fairness of their decisions and policies. In Saskatchewan, complaints to the Ombudsman include areas such as health care, social services, correctional centres and Crown corporations such as SaskTel, SGI and SaskEnergy. Ombudsmen evaluate (investigate, negotiate, mediate) and form conclusions about what would be right or fair in a given situation. They can make recommendations to government. Ombudsmen regularly challenge government about its services and ask for changes.

Note: A parliamentary ombudsman is an ombudsman appointed by a parliament, sometimes also known as a government ombudsman.

Suggested Contest Topics

- ***Accountable for Fairness:*** What role do parliamentary ombudsmen play in holding governments accountable for fairness? How do ombudsmen use dialectical evaluation and conflict resolution to press governments for change? Why is this important? Provide examples from ombudsman offices in Canada or around the world where ombudsman recommendations have resulted in changes to legislation.

Research Tips: Check ombudsman websites for historical records of past successes and for special reports. Special reports often contain significant recommendations, some of which require legislative changes. It may also be useful to look for government responses to these recommendations so you can tell whether the recommendations were accepted (and changes made).

Sharing Fair Ideas: The concept of ombudsman work started in 1809 with the decision of the Swedish parliament to introduce a parliamentary ombudsman. Now, we have not only parliamentary ombudsmen, but many other kinds of ombudsmen. How has the concept of keeping government fair shifted to other areas? What other kinds of ombudsmen are there? How do they define fairness? What are the similarities and differences between these other ombudsmen and the parliamentary ombudsman?

Research Tips: General online searches should reveal information about various ombudsman offices (parliamentary and otherwise) and what they do.

Law 30

Curriculum Tie-ins

Unit One – Foundations of the Canadian Legal System

- ✎ From **“Foundational Objectives, Values”**: “Appreciate the need to protect individuals and groups from arbitrary actions.”
- ✎ From **“Upholding and Enforcing Laws”**: “The systems of legislation and the courts are important institutions of the Canadian legal system. There are also other components to the implementation of justice in Canada. These include the correctional system, jails, and penitentiaries, and the parole system designed for public protection, deterrent and rehabilitation, as well as policing, including R.C.M.P., provincial and municipal police forces.

Other organizations and institutions also have an interest in the administration of justice, such as the office of the Ombudsman, the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society, and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.”

Unit Two – Criminal Law

- ✎ From **“Foundational Objectives”**: “Appreciate the history and philosophy of alternate dispute resolution mechanisms.”
- ✎ From **“Concept and Knowledge Objectives, Reality”**: “Know that in reality, the world in which people live their daily lives is a messy, confused mixture of categories, values and points of view about which people are emotional, reasonable, unreasonable and confused.

Know that within this confusion, there will be, at minimum, two points of view, and usually more, that have to be defined and examined from different points of view before it is possible to determine truth, morality and ethical behaviour.”

Unit Three – Civil Law

- ✎ From **“Alternate Dispute Resolution”**: “Know that alternative dispute resolution is the process of resolving disputes through means other than litigation and civil trial.”

The Ombudsman Tie-in: Parliamentary ombudsmen investigate complaints from individuals and groups about unfairness in government services, including provincial correctional centres, social services, health services, and Crown corporations like SGI, SaskPower and SaskTel. An ombudsman is often an alternative to the court system and they traditionally investigate as a means of determining whether what happened was fair. There are also some ombudsman offices, like Ombudsman Saskatchewan, that regularly use alternative dispute resolution methods like negotiation and mediation to resolve some of the issues that people bring to them. Whatever the method of dealing with complaints, parliamentary ombudsmen are expected to remain impartial as they sift through the various points of view that relate to any given complaint.

Note: A parliamentary ombudsman is an ombudsman appointed by a parliament, sometimes also known as a government ombudsman.

Suggested Contest Topics

- ***What's Fair Behind Bars?***: When someone is sentenced to a prison term, they can expect some restrictions and challenges, but how much is too much? What kinds of complaints do prisoners make to ombudsman in Canada and in other countries? What role do ombudsman play in ensuring fairness for prisoners?

Research Tips: Search ombudsman websites and news websites. While there is no national ombudsman in Canada, the provincial (parliamentary) ombudsman take complaints about provincial jails and the National Corrections Ombudsman takes complaints about national jails.

- ***Sifting Stories and Tracking Down Facts***: When people take a complaint to a parliamentary ombudsman, there are often conflicting stories about what happened and why. There are also varying expectations about what government should or should not do. What skills does an ombudsman need when sorting through these different stories? When would alternative dispute resolution methods such as negotiation or mediation be helpful? Use examples.

Research Tips: Search online for ombudsman offices that offer alternative dispute resolution or services such as negotiation or mediation. You may also want to search legal or other websites for information about alternative dispute resolution.

History 10

Curriculum Tie-ins

Unit One – Political Decision Making

- ↳ From “**Concepts (Knowledge Objectives), Social Contract**”: “Know that societies have to make decisions about how best to reconcile the conflicting interests within society.”
- ↳ From “**Concepts (Knowledge Objectives), Conflict**”: “Know that the control, management, and resolution of conflicts is one of the main responsibilities of political systems.”

Unit Three – The Development of Nation States

- ↳ From “**Concepts (Knowledge Objectives), Order**”: “Know that social organizations play a significant role in providing order and direction within a society.”

The Ombudsman Tie-in: A parliamentary ombudsman is an impartial body who takes complaints from the public about unfairness in government services. He or she can investigate the matter to determine what happened and can make recommendations to the government about what should be done. The first parliamentary ombudsman was appointed in Sweden in 1809. The idea was based on an earlier appointment by Charles XII, who became King of Sweden in 1697 at the age of 15 and who appointed an ombudsman to make sure government officials and the military were following the laws while the King was out of the country, fighting in wars.

Note: A parliamentary ombudsman is an ombudsman appointed by a parliament, sometimes also known as a government ombudsman.

Suggested Contest Topics

- ***Fairness Then and Now:*** What were the powers and responsibilities of the first ombudsman, appointed in Sweden in 1809? What are the powers and responsibilities of a parliamentary ombudsman now? Compare the kinds of issues the first ombudsman would have dealt with compared with a modern-day ombudsman.

Research Tips: Search ombudsman websites for information about their powers and responsibilities. Search for information about Sweden in 1809 and the first parliamentary ombudsman, Lars August Mannerheim.

- ***The History of the Parliamentary Ombudsman:*** When and where was the first ombudsman appointed and where did the idea come from? How has that idea changed and developed over time?

Research Tips: Search for information about Sweden in 1809 and the first parliamentary ombudsman, Lars August Mannerheim. Also look for information about Charles XII of Sweden.

History 20

Curriculum Tie-ins

Unit One – Death of the Old Order

- ✎ From “**Concepts (Knowledge Objectives)**”: “Know that when people have no alternative way of gaining recognition for their grievances, they may resort to violence as a way of expressing their discontent.”
- ✎ From “**Concepts (Knowledge Objectives), Political Accountability**”: “Know that governments were forced to become increasingly responsive to the needs of people in order to maintain political power.”
- ✎ From “**Concepts (Knowledge Objectives), Political Accountability**”: Know that political accountability would demand that those responsible for governing should take responsibility for their decisions.”

Unit Five – Global Issues

- ✎ From “**Concepts, Change**”: “Know that groups who seek redress from governments and the larger society have a variety of methods available to them to gain public support and promote legal and political changes.”

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History 30

Curriculum Tie-ins

Unit One – Relationships: People and Paradigms

- ↳ **From “Worldview”:** “Know that every society will evolve a worldview that includes assumptions and practices that surround certain key societal relationships, including: the relationship between the members of a society and the societal decision-making processes that impact their lives...”

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