



NATIVE WOMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES  
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA

# Voting Guide for Young Aboriginal Women

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## Introduction

Young Aboriginal women are among the fastest-growing population in Canada. They are also greatly under-represented in voter turnout for Canadian elections. Although this group has a lot to offer Canadian society, their voice is not currently being heard.

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has received generous support from Elections Canada to develop this easy-to-read, useful guide to help young Aboriginal women better understand the electoral system in Canada. The guide can be used as a civic education tool for Aboriginal secondary students or to facilitate workshops.

In addition, NWAC facilitated a two-hour focus group session on November 28, 2013 with young Aboriginal women between the ages of 18 and 30 living in the Ottawa area. This session focused primarily on voter participation of young Aboriginal women. It explored the topics of what motivates them to vote, barriers to and benefits of voting, strategies to increase voter turnout, and what would make them feel their issues are a priority and their vote mattered. The results of the focus group will be used throughout the guide to explore the attitudes, views and practices of young Aboriginal women in terms of participating in the electoral process in Canada.

This guide aims to explain the voting process in Canada so participants will feel more confident and informed when going to vote. It may also help them play a larger role in shaping their community –by learning about the electoral process, they can develop confidence to run for a leadership position in their community or elsewhere. As well, the guide provides information on the benefits and challenges of voting, offering actionable solutions to many common barriers. It also includes useful activities on the topics of voting and civic participation to help engage young Aboriginal women.

Information covered includes:

- the history of Aboriginal voting in Canada
- Canada's system of government
- benefits of participating in elections
- challenges to voting and solutions
- what you need to know about voting
- activities to encourage learning about voting
- a glossary of terms used in elections

The four activities are targeted toward young Aboriginal women to get them thinking about voting and the electoral process. Some activities are intended to be completed in groups of 10 or more people but can be done individually, with the exception of Activity 4 (How to Run a Mock Election).

By voting in federal elections, young Aboriginal women can make a significant difference in the lives of their family and community!

## Why Is It Important to Engage Young Aboriginal Women?

Traditionally, Aboriginal women played a central role in the health and well-being of their communities. They were decision makers in the use of resources, economics and politics; they determined leadership; and they were leaders themselves.

Prior to colonization, Aboriginal women enjoyed comparative honour, equality and political power as the men. Today, it is important that Aboriginal women reclaim the power they once held within their communities.

To build healthier societies, young Aboriginal women need to be involved in all aspects of their communities, including civic participation. They are an untapped resource that can contribute to social outcomes that lead to significant impacts and positive change.

Engagement and participation among young Aboriginal women in Canada's electoral process will allow them to better understand the issues that affect them, encourage discussion, promote change and help them resume important leadership roles in the political sphere.

It will also lead to:

- enhanced community involvement
- their voices being heard by leaders and politicians
- increased representation in leadership positions and in all levels of government
- increased voter turnout among young Aboriginal women
- increased sense of value and purpose in changing the way their community, province, territory or Canada as a whole operates

**"Young Aboriginal women are powerful drivers of change."**

Dr. Dawn Harvard  
NWAC Vice-President

In 2012, out of 633 chiefs, 111 were women. Although the percentage of female Aboriginal chiefs in 2012 was only 17.5%, this was slightly higher than the percentage of female mayors of Canadian cities.

More women serve in First Nations governments, and a growing number of Aboriginal women hold leadership roles in regional and national political organizations.

[www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/native-womens-issues/](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/native-womens-issues/)

## Aboriginal Women and the Right to Vote

Aboriginal peoples did not always enjoy full citizenship in Canada. While Canadians had the right to vote, First Nations peoples could only vote if they chose to give up their treaty rights and Indian status. This was called “voluntary enfranchisement.”

While non-Aboriginal women were granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1921, it was not until 1960 that all First Nations peoples, men and women, were granted that same right without giving up their treaty rights and status.

Unlike First Nations, Inuit women and men had the right to vote in federal elections held after 1950. Métis men never had specific restrictions put on their right to vote, and Métis women obtained the right in 1921 alongside non-Aboriginal women.

The inclusion of Aboriginal women into Canada’s political arena is a recent phenomenon, and they have since shown their value within the political process. Aboriginal women are resilient; they are caretakers, leaders and are committed to creating positive change that will benefit their communities and all Aboriginal peoples; and, when in power, they will usually do what they can to improve the lives of their constituents within their communities.

### Aboriginal women and Canadian politics

Aboriginal women are making a difference working within parties, as well as running as candidates, and in leadership and decision-making roles. Here’s a list of notable Aboriginal women who are making a difference in community, federal, provincial and territorial politics and in academia and research.

**Ethel Blondin-Andrews** was the first Aboriginal woman to be elected to the Parliament of Canada. She is a Dene who was first elected in 1988 as a Member of Parliament (MP) for the riding of Western Arctic in the Northwest Territories. She was re-elected in 1993 and was appointed Secretary of State for Training and Youth, making her the first Aboriginal woman to become a member of the Privy Council and Cabinet.

**Nellie Cournoyea** is a former Canadian politician of Inupiaq heritage, who served as the sixth premier of the Northwest Territories from 1991 to 1995. She was the first female premier of a Canadian territory and the second female premier in Canadian history.

**Thelma J. Chalifoux** is a former Canadian politician and teacher. She was the first female Métis to receive the National Aboriginal Achievement Award. Chalifoux was appointed to the Canadian Senate on November 26, 1997. She served in the Senate until February 8, 2004, when she retired and returned to her roots. She now operates the Michif Cultural Institute in St. Albert, Alberta.

**Tina Keeper** is a Cree activist, politician and former actress from Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has been very active on suicide prevention as a member of a visioning committee for a Manitoba suicide prevention program. From 2006 to 2008, Keeper was the MP for the riding of Churchill in Manitoba.

**Leona Aglukkak** was first elected to work for the Nunavummiut in the House of Commons in October 2008. On October 30, 2008, she became the first Inuk to be sworn into the Cabinet, as the Minister of Health. She is now the Minister of Environment.

**Shelly Glover** is a Manitoba Métis who was first elected as an MP in 2008 to represent Saint Boniface, Manitoba. She is the first female police officer to be elected in Canadian parliamentary history. Shelly Glover is currently serving as the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

**Eva Aariak** was elected in the 2008 territorial election to represent the electoral district of Iqaluit East in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. She subsequently served as Premier of Nunavut until 2013. Aariak was the fifth woman to serve as a premier in Canada.

**Caitlin Tolley** is an Algonquin leader from Kitigan-Zibi. She has been a member of the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council and has worked to advocate for First Nations youth. In 2012, at the age of 21, she was the youngest band councillor elected to her community.

**Rebekah Elkerton** is Anishinaabe from Chippewas of the Thames. She is the Vice-President of the First Peoples' Council at Carleton University and has worked to advocate for First Nations women while at the Native Women's Association of Canada and throughout her personal life. She is also on the Aboriginal Education Council and was the recipient of the Rose Nolan Memorial Scholarship, a prestigious award.

**Lorna Standingready** was born and raised on the Peepeekisis Reserve. She excelled at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, University of Regina, holds a Bachelor of Administration (2000).

Lorna was the recipient of the Saskatchewan Indian Women's Association Appreciation Award, and in 2005 she received the Saskatchewan Jubilee Award. She has also been involved in the women's movement, health and child welfare programs and, as of 2008, with the John Howard Society.

#### Did you know...?

Democracy is generally a system of government in which the people have the power to make decisions and elect representatives.

## Canada's System of Government

The Canadian government is a representative democracy. This means it is a form of government in which all eligible citizens have the right to participate in decisions that

### Did you know...?

The words Parliament and government do not mean the same thing.

**Government:** The running or governing of a country.

**Parliament:** is made up of the Crown, Senate and House of Commons. Its responsibility is law-making (legislative).

affect them, either directly or through an elected representative. Prior to European contact, Aboriginal communities governed themselves and their territories through a range of different political systems, including democratic forms of government.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to being an independent sovereign democracy, Canada is also a federal state made up of 10 provinces and three territories.

In democracies such as Canada, political parties are elected to run a government. A political party is a group of people who share common ideas, goals and principles as to how the country should be governed.

### How is the federal government structured?<sup>2</sup>

The federal government is divided into three branches:

1. The **executive branch** is the decision making branch of government and is made up of the Crown, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.
2. The **legislative branch** of the federal government is responsible for approving or rejecting proposed federal laws, and for debating and discussing issues important to Canada. It is made up of two chambers, the House of Commons and the Senate. Because there are two chambers, the system is referred to as “bicameral.”

*House of Commons:*

With 308 elected members of Parliament (MPs), the House of Commons votes on bills and passes laws. MPs represent the people in their riding and are usually associated with a political party. Each MP represents approximately 100,000 Canadians. The next general election in 2015 will have 338 new ridings in place.

*Crown:*

The Governor General (GG) is the Queen’s representative in Canada. The GG does not support any political party, and today has mostly ceremonial duties. However, the GG is responsible for signing bills into law to make them official (also known as giving “royal assent”) and is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Forces.

*Prime Minister:*

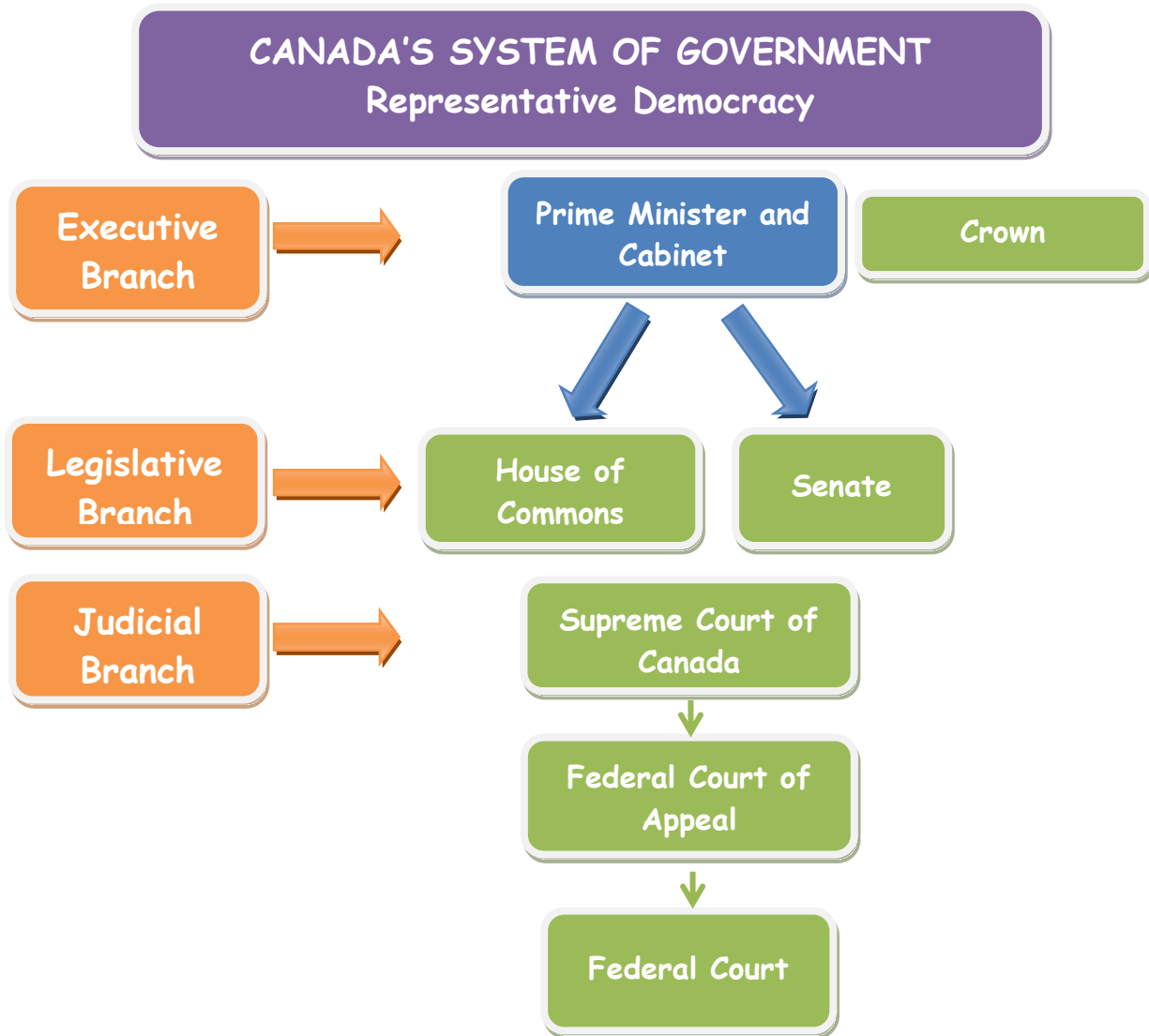
The Prime Minister is the head of the government and is in charge of the Cabinet. The Prime Minister is the leader of the party that has the most seats in the House of Commons.

*Cabinet:*

Cabinet ministers are usually selected from the members of the House of Commons but can also come from the Senate or outside of Parliament. The Prime Minister selects Cabinet ministers, and the ministers are responsible for different federal departments, such as Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Health Canada,

*Senate:* Senators are appointed by the GG on the advice of the Prime Minister. The 105 senators who sit in the Senate are responsible for voting bills into law.

- 3. The **judicial branch** is responsible through a series of independent courts (Supreme Court, Federal Court and Federal Court of Appeal) for applying laws to citizens, governments and corporations. The laws are passed by the executive and legislative branches. Judges are appointed by the federal government.



**Did you know...?**  
Provincial and territorial governments also have a three-branch system consisting of executive, legislative and judicial branches, but they only have one chamber so the system is known as "unicameral."



## What are the three levels of government and what do they do?<sup>3</sup>

Canada has three main levels of government: 1) federal, 2) provincial or territorial, and 3) municipal.

1. The **federal level** (the Government of Canada) is responsible for things that affect the whole country: citizenship and immigration, foreign affairs, national defence and trade. It is also responsible for Aboriginal affairs and northern development.
2. The **provincial or territorial level** (for example, the Province of Manitoba) is responsible for things within that region, such as social services (education and health care), property and civil rights, water management and highways.
3. The **municipal level** is usually linked to a city, town or district. It is responsible for areas such as water and sewer services, roadways, public transit, local police, firefighting, animal control and waste management.

Sometimes these three levels of government share responsibilities in terms of the environment, parks, economic development and laws.

Also across the country, there are band councils that govern First Nations communities, as well as Inuit and Métis governance structures that make decisions and policies in their communities. These elected councils are similar to municipal councils. They make decisions on issues such as membership, education, health, cultural programs, planning and land use, hunting, fishing, trapping and plant harvesting.

## What is civic participation?

Aboriginal women have always been involved in politics at the community level and want to be more active in other levels of government.

Civic participation or civic engagement means

*“Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.”<sup>4</sup>*

### Did you know...?

Civic participation builds and strengthens social networks within the community; it needs to be inclusive, respectful, flexible and adaptive.

You may have already been involved in civic participation. In general, there are two ways to engage as an individual or citizen: participating from **within** the existing political structures or **outside** the formal structures of the governmental system. Some examples follow.

### Participation from within<sup>5</sup>

- *Political parties*: Running as a candidate in a federal, provincial, territorial or municipal election; assisting with an election campaign; volunteering for a political party or a candidate.
- *Chief and band council*: Running in community band elections, promoting a community candidate.
- *Voting*: Voting in a community band election; voting in a federal, provincial, territorial or municipal election.

#### Did you know...?

Civic participation has the potential to empower young Aboriginal women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence to become strong leaders.

### Participation from outside

- *Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)*: Assisting in public awareness campaigns, engaging in social media activism.
- *Protest groups*: Lobbying or rallying on certain issues, boycotting a product for ethical reasons, signing petitions, protesting proposed laws (e.g. Idle No More).
- *Community groups*: Participating on a women's committee in the community to talk about important issues, organizing community meetings to educate members, fundraising to enhance awareness, volunteering at events in the community.
- *Individual*: Participating on a committee in your community, following the news.

## Why Should I Vote?

When young Aboriginal women vote, they have the opportunity to give leaders direction on issues that affect them. If the majority of youth were to vote in elections, leaders and politicians would be more open to addressing such issues. Remember: Voting is only one form of democratic participation, but it can have a major impact on the lives of many.

## Why is voting important?

There are many reasons to vote – here are some that we've heard:

- It determines who governs us and makes the decisions that affect our lives
- Parties are more likely to pay attention to groups of people who vote (for example, if all young Aboriginal women were to vote, then politicians might develop platforms that address their needs and be more likely to consult them. Consequently, there could be significant positive change on the issues they face)
- It has an impact on future generations - by getting politicians to know more about Aboriginal women and by setting an example for youth participation
- Voting is one of the only forms of democratic engagement that allows equal voice among anyone who participates
- High turnout from Aboriginal voters could lead to more interest from Canadian government in Aboriginal votes
- Greater likelihood of consultations with young Aboriginal women on their issues to set agendas and develop strategies for youth outreach before elections
- Visits from officials in your community, at your door
- Gets youth issues on the agenda and into party platforms
- Voting gives you more of a voice
- Potential for more government attention to Aboriginal rights and protection of treaties
- Political leverage and ability to shape policy
- Voting may contribute to more Aboriginal people running in elections
- Representation of Aboriginal peoples in all levels of government
- Greater control over the decisions that affect your life
- Improvement of programs and services
- Potential to influence economic and social well-being
- Youth would feel the elected government represents their views

## How Do I Decide Who to Vote For?

Deciding who to vote for can be tricky. Before you vote, it is important to know who the candidates are, what party they represent, their views on important issues, and what the political party commits to do if elected (party platform). There are many useful websites that provide you with each party's platform and highlight their views and priority issues.

The current registered political parties in Canada are:

- Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada
- Bloc Québécois
- Canadian Action Party
- Christian Heritage Party of Canada
- Communist Party of Canada
- Conservative Party of Canada
- Green Party of Canada
- Liberal Party of Canada
- Libertarian Party of Canada
- Marijuana Party
- Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada
- New Democratic Party
- Party for Accountability, Competency and Transparency
- Pirate Party of Canada
- Progressive Canadian Party
- Rhinoceros Party
- United Party of Canada

To find out more on the political parties in Canada, please visit this website:  
[www.elections.ca/content.aspx?dir=par&document=index&lang=e&section=pol](http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?dir=par&document=index&lang=e&section=pol).



**Remember, it is important to choose the political candidate who will best represent you, your family and your community's interests.**

**Step 1:** Gather information on the political parties and learn about their views on issues. Create a list of important issues that you want to see addressed in your community (for example, the rights of young Aboriginal women). Once completed, see if you notice any similarities between your list and the views of a specific political party.

**Step 2:** Find your riding to determine which candidates are running there. Visit [www.elections.ca/scripts/vis/FindED?L=e](http://www.elections.ca/scripts/vis/FindED?L=e).

**Step 3:** Decide what you are looking for in a candidate. What qualities and values do you think are important for a candidate to have? (For example, honesty, respectfulness, moral demeanour, etc.) Listen to their speeches and find out more about their opinions and what motivates them. Does the candidate of the party that you feel best represents your interests share similar qualities you value? Do you relate to the candidate?

**Step 4:** Once you have chosen a political party, learn about the candidate's leadership abilities, experience and past actions. Have they been active on the issues you want to see addressed in your community? Then, engage in discussions with other people on the candidates to learn their view.

**Step 5:** Make your judgment. Which political party and candidate will best represent you as a young Aboriginal woman and your community?

#### **Did you know...?**

If more young Aboriginal women voted, leaders and politicians would be more responsive to their issues.

### **What are some important issues and political priorities for young Aboriginal women?**

When thinking about an election and the different candidates, it is important to do some research on the topic, search the Internet, watch or read the news, talk to your chief and council, discuss with friends, classmates, teachers, or contact an Aboriginal organization in your area. This will help you to reflect on the position of candidates in their different political platforms and consider the issues that are important to you. You can also look into the candidates' past performance, statements and behaviour on an issue. This will help you predict how they might act when the issue comes forward again.

If Aboriginal communities are to protect their unique languages, cultures and identities, engagement in the electoral system is essential. In order to move forward in achieving these goals, communities need representatives who will support Aboriginal communities at the national level. It is important to do some research on this topic, search the Internet, watch or read the news, talk to your chief and council, discuss with friends, classmates, teachers, or contact an Aboriginal organization in your area.

Reflect on the position of candidates in their different political platforms and consider the following questions:

- Have they spoken publicly about their position on Aboriginal self-determination and other issues? If so, did you agree with their position?
- Have they attended community meetings or other events where issues important to young Aboriginal women were discussed? Do they support young Aboriginal women's issues?

- Do they work collaboratively with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada when addressing human rights issues at the international level and implementing them in Canada? (For example, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)
- Does their political party support equitable funding that will provide opportunities for young Aboriginal women and communities?
- Do they work with Aboriginal leaders to ensure that young Aboriginal women have equitable opportunities to attain an education and employment?

By evaluating a candidate's past performance, statements and behaviour on an issue, we can understand how they will likely act when the issue comes forward again.

What are some important issues and political priorities for young Aboriginal women?

Civic engagement and participation among young Aboriginal women allows them to contribute to issues they care about and participate in decisions that affect them and their communities. Some of the main issues identified in the focus group as being important for improving the lives of Aboriginal women and girls include the following:

- *Education* (e.g. Aboriginal curriculum development, such as Aboriginal history, cultures, traditions and languages taught in Aboriginal schools by Aboriginal teachers).
- *Health* (e.g. maternal and youth health, Aboriginal health workers, cultural safety, traditional medicine, mental health, suicide, addictions, nutrition and food security, chronic and communicable conditions, diabetes prevention and treatment).
- *Human rights* (e.g. gender-based discrimination, poverty, prostitution, trafficking, violence prevention, missing and murdered women, homelessness, children's rights and aid).

### **Myth - The "Wasted" Vote**

Voting for a party that does not win has sometimes been called a "wasted" vote. However, it is important to point out that no vote is a waste. Regardless of the outcome, you were part of a fair and democratic election at the federal, provincial, territorial or municipal level.

To vote is to make your voice and opinion heard by selecting the candidate you want to represent you. Whether that person wins or loses, you have done your part to express your democratic opinion.

- *Aboriginal self-determination* (self-governance, including to protect Aboriginal languages, cultures and identities).
- *Economic development* (e.g. social and physical infrastructures, drinking water and sanitation systems, support for traditional economies).
- *Environment* (e.g. mining, water, pollution).
- *Leadership* (e.g. Aboriginal women in political decision-making roles).
- *Social programs* (e.g. child care, low-income support, employment, skills training).
- *Housing* (e.g. improved housing conditions; secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing).

## What Are Some Challenges to Voting?

Some Aboriginal people choose not to vote in federal elections because of their views on Aboriginal sovereignty. In some communities, the general view is that they are a sovereign people, meaning that they are not Canadians. For this reason many believe they should not interfere in Canada's elections and governance, and the Canadian government should not interfere in theirs. However, if Aboriginals were to vote in federal elections, they may find Canadian politicians to be more positive and more active on issues important to Aboriginal peoples.

### **Specific challenges for young Aboriginal women voting**

Here are some challenges identified in the focus group that young Aboriginal women face when it comes to voting:

- Lack of faith in voting in band elections since certain families get elected
- Family doesn't vote, history of not voting
- Candidates do not represent Aboriginal peoples or interests
- Lack of information on the electoral process and where to go to vote
- Lack of valid identification to vote and proof of address
- Issues accessing the voting station
- Being away from their riding during the election
- Lack of motivation, interest or caring
- Lack of advertisements and awareness
- Lack of Aboriginal representatives as candidates in elections
- Students are away and move a lot, do not receive voter information card
- Do not feel that their vote will make a difference
- Lack of opportunity or support (poverty, for example, can mean no transportation)

Civic engagement and participation can counter many of the challenges young Aboriginal women face, such as marginalization. Involvement in the community empowers them to be a part of the decision-making process and encourages other women and girls to engage in civic participation.

### **How can voter turnout among young Aboriginal women be increased?**

Young Aboriginal women represent a large population that could create major social, political and economic transformation for all Aboriginal communities in Canada simply through an increase in civic engagement. The list below shows the ways voting can be



increased among young Aboriginal women discussed during the focus group. Some of these can be achieved by women themselves, while others can be requested from the political party of their choosing or from the government:

- Include issues that are important to young Aboriginal women in party platforms
- Implement gender-specific programs that promote Aboriginal women and girls in decision-making and leadership roles
- Foster genuine commitment toward Aboriginal issues (not just tokenism)
- Encourage community education, and sharing information on political parties and players
- Develop easy-to-understand resources and information on the electoral system and voting process
- Make available accessible videos on the voting process and political parties to address literacy issues
- Have more candidates that young Aboriginal women identify with and who reflect their needs and issues
- Have more Aboriginal candidates running in the election
- Discuss politics with parents, teachers, and other agents of socialization
- Promote engagement online and through social media (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.)
- Have Aboriginal champions, celebrities and role models encourage voting – like Wab Kinew, broadcaster; Mary Spencer, Olympic boxer; Ryan McMahon, comedian; Jordan Tootoo, NHL player
- Have young Aboriginal women encourage their friends to vote
- Teach at the grassroots level – keep it simple

*“People are just not aware of the political system so they do not get involved. Young Aboriginal women need to feel represented, like it is for them.”*

Sunshine Tenasco, focus group participant

## Voting 101 – Q & A

(All information in this section has been adapted from Elections Canada)<sup>6</sup>

### **Am I eligible to vote?**

You are eligible to vote if you are 18 years of age or older, a Canadian citizen, and if you are registered to vote.

### **How do I register to vote?**

To vote in a federal election, your name must be on Elections Canada's voters list. To register to vote (or to check if you are already registered), you can:

1. Use the online voter registration service (E-Registration) at [elections.ca/register](http://elections.ca/register). If you are not already registered, E-Registration will guide you in completing an online printable registration form.
2. Call Elections Canada. If you are not registered, they will e-mail, mail or fax you a registration form.
3. Register at the polls. If you can't register ahead of time, you can still register when you go vote.

### **How do I vote in a federal election?**

Elections Canada mails all registered voters a voter information card soon after the election is called. The voter information card tells you where, when and the ways to vote.

If you did not register in time to receive the voter information card, you can also visit [elections.ca/vote](http://elections.ca/vote) or call Elections Canada for more information.

There are four different ways you can vote. Whichever way you choose, you will need to prove your identity and address. The options are:

#### **1. On election day**

On Election Day, go to your polling station to vote. Take your voter information card, valid identification and proof of address with you when you go to vote. The date, times and address will be on the card. Elections are normally held on a Monday, and polls are open for 12 hours.

#### **2. At the advance polls**

You can vote earlier by voting at the advance polls. These are polling stations made available before Election Day for those who are unable to vote during the regular time. They are held on the tenth, ninth, eighth and seventh day before Election Day.

#### **How do I contact Elections Canada?**

Call 1-800-463-6868 or visit  
<http://www.elections.ca/home.as>

### 3. Elections Canada offices

You can vote at over 400 Elections Canada offices across the country. Offices are open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., 7 days a week. For the 2015 election, additional offices will be set up on 39 school campuses (universities, colleges and cégeps), 18 friendship centres and 3 YMCAs/ community centres. These offices will be open for the 4 days before the first day of advance polls. For a list of locations, contact Elections Canada or check out the website.

### 4. By mail

To vote by mail, you need to:

- Complete and print a request form online or get one at any Elections Canada office, (if you are outside of the country, you can also get one at a Canadian embassy, consulate or high commission).
- Send Elections Canada your form with a copy of your ID and they'll mail you a voting kit.
- Return your marked ballot to Elections Canada before the deadline on Election Day.

Don't wait to request your voting kit – there are deadlines to vote by mail. Once you request a voting kit, you can't vote on Election Day or on advance voting days.

### I am out of the country during the election. How do I vote?

You can vote by mail (see above).

### I live on a reserve. Can I vote?

Yes, polling stations are established on reserve when the polling division is completely (or mostly) made up of a reserve. In most cases, the polling station is located at the band council office or the community centre. If the band council does not allow a polling station to be set up on the reserve, it will be located in an area outside of the reserve.

### What identification do I need to vote?

You need to prove your identity and address to vote.

Show your driver's license or any government card with your photo, name and address.

Or

Show two pieces of ID: both pieces must have your name, and one must have your address. For example: your health card and a utility bill.

### Students - Get Ready to Vote

Which address do I use to register?

If you live in two places - one while at school, the other while away from school - choose which you consider home and use that address to register.

You vote for a candidate in the riding where your home address is located.

When and where can I vote?

In your home riding, you can vote on Election Day or on advance voting days.

Home or away, you can vote by mail or at any Elections Canada office. Deadlines apply.

There are many different pieces of ID you can use to vote. Visit [elections.ca/id](https://elections.ca/id) or call Elections Canada for more information.

## **What happens when I go vote?**

1. When you enter the polling place, an election worker greets you and shows you to the right table.
2. At your table, show your proof of identity and address.
3. The election worker will initial, fold and hand you a ballot.
4. Go behind the voting screen, mark and refold your ballot to keep it secret.
5. Return your ballot to the worker so they can tear off the tab.
6. Put your ballot in the box.

## **Promote Voting Among other Young Aboriginal Women!**

### **Post flyers**

- Post flyers with general Election Day information (for example, a list of candidates etc.) throughout your community.
- Customize the flyer to fit your community. For example, include culturally appropriate information and the Aboriginal issues that affect you and your community.
- Share Elections Canada materials.

### **Radio**

- Ask the local radio station to announce the candidates, election date and voting requirements. If you live in a community where your Aboriginal language is spoken, make sure the announcements are given in that language as well.

### **Pow Wows and other community events**

- Community announcements are usually shared by an emcee at Pow Wows and other community events. Advise them to talk about the importance of young Aboriginal women and voting.

### **Social media**

- Create a Facebook group or Twitter account that discusses the importance of young Aboriginal women and voting, and the current Aboriginal issues specific to your community. This allows other women to connect with you and share similar or distinct experiences. Use hashtags such as **#AboriginalWomenVote** or **#AboriginalVote**.

## Activity 1 – Elections Word Search

This word search is for young Aboriginal women to help engage them in an activity to learn the terminology associated with civic participation.

M C C Z S O V A O V E T E Y F S N E L G  
O O I F S T G C W Z A M E X Z S L L I O  
P O V C Y J H Y O U T H S P G E O T C V  
N O I T A T S G N I L L O P C D N N N E  
R B C V M F R B I W N U E T E E E O U R  
E I E I O R B E V R G Y I M M M I Z O N  
D L N U K T O Q F W S O O R O T D E C M  
A L G F Y Y E F K E N C E W C S E I D E  
E E A W S Z T R T S R W V E Y E P E N N  
L K G G N B L T C A O E L A S M X S A T  
A P E L T Y X A C P L E N R U T X I B N  
Z D M A R C N Y M L J P B D B K D H Z W  
R S E I M A T E T J F K Y N U G E C V P  
K G N I D I R B O R Q C I T V M X N F L  
J W T A B O R I G I N A L X R P B A E R  
P O L I T I C S E T A D I D N A C R D V  
K E Z C K N Z K K T F Y G A L B P F E S  
O O H S W O T N X W S G D L Z A O X R X  
V S W A Y G H W X U L B O N K J M C A I  
Z S C H N G S K H A E T P B Y Z S L L Z

**ABORIGINAL  
BILL  
DEMOCRACY  
EMPOWERMENT  
GOVERNMENT  
PARTY PLATFORM  
REFERENDUM  
VOTER**

**CANDIDATE  
ELECTION  
FEDERAL  
LEADER  
POLITICS  
RIDING  
WOMEN  
BAND COUNCIL**

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  
ELECTIONS CANADA  
FRANCHISE  
NWAC  
POLLING STATION  
RIGHTS  
YOUTH**

## Activity 2 – Survey to See Who Shares Your Political Views

Brainstorm with the other participants a minimum of ten (10) issues that are important and create a survey, such as the one below.

Once the survey is finished, you along with the other participants will each receive a copy to rate each statement on a scale from 1 to 5 according to your views and opinion on the issue (**1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = No opinion, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly disagree**).

Circle the number that best fits your view on the statement. When you're done rating all of the statements, add up your 10 circled numbers. Once you have your score, group yourself with other individuals who have similar scores. Use the following ranges to find your group: 1–10, 11–20, 21–30, 31–40, 41–50.

Once you find your group, no matter how big or small, give your group a name: this will be your political party. Discuss the statements with your group members.

Example Survey: Identifying important issues among young Aboriginal women						
	Statements	<b>1 = Strongly agree</b> <b>2 = Agree</b> <b>3 = No opinion</b> <b>4 = Disagree</b> <b>5 = Strongly disagree</b>				
<b>1</b>	<i>Example 1: Daycares should be subsidized.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>2</b>	<i>Example 2: There should be more Aboriginal teachers on reserve.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3</b>	<i>Example 3: Aboriginal peoples should participate in economic development.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5

## Activity 3 – Building Young Aboriginal Women Leaders

This activity encourages young Aboriginal women to think about the qualities that would make a positive female Aboriginal leader or politician. It also explores ideas about the qualities of current and future leaders that you would vote for, as well as the qualities that you would like to possess in becoming a leader yourself.

**Choose the top five qualities or characteristics that you think are the most important for a female Aboriginal leader to have? Explain your choice.**

- Inspirational
- Open-minded
- Good listening skills
- Aboriginal traditional/cultural values
- Eccentric
- Popular
- Role model
- Good judgment
- Intelligent
- Educated
- Cultured
- Tactful
- Social
- Antagonistic
- Fair
- Youthful
- Trustworthy
- Positive attitude
- Flexible
- Approachable
- Opinionated
- Witty
- Parent
- Cares about all social groups and doesn't discriminate
- Honest
- Kind
- Street-smart / Life experience
- Truthful
- Cares about people and community needs
- Moral
- Generous of spirit
- Reliable
- Compassionate
- Energetic
- Takes action
- Humble
- Able to delegate
- Communicates effectively
- Sense of humour
- Confident
- Committed
- Creative
- Intuitive
- Ethical
- Sensitive to issues that impact women
- Strong character
- Charismatic
- Competent
- Courageous
- Discerning

1) _____ Explain:
2) _____ Explain:
3) _____ Explain:
4) _____ Explain:
5) _____ Explain:

## Activity 4 - How to Run a Mock Election

After completing Activity 2, you will have several groups with similar values and goals. These groups make up your different political parties and have their name. Think about the leadership qualities in Activity 3 and nominate a leader for your party. Once selected, this person (candidate) will have five minutes to talk about the issues that he or she supports and plans to improve. Then, everyone will receive a ballot paper and vote for the candidate they think should be elected. Think about what issues matter to you when voting. Once you have finished voting, place the ballot paper in the ballot box. Have someone count out all the votes in front of a witness. The candidate with the most votes will be declared the winner!

**What you'll need:** Below are sample ballot papers for voting. In alphabetical order, write the names of each candidate on the ballot paper and repeat their names on each ballot. Photocopy this entire ballot page to make as many ballots as you need. Cut out the individual ballot papers.

**BALLOT PAPER**  
**Vote for One Candidate Only**

Mark an (X) in the right-hand box next to the name of the candidate you wish to vote for.


**BALLOT PAPER**  
**Vote for One Candidate Only**

Mark an (X) in the right-hand box next to the name of the candidate you wish to vote for.




**BALLOT PAPER**  
**Vote for One Candidate Only**

Mark an (X) in the right-hand box next to the name of the candidate you wish to vote for.


**BALLOT PAPER**  
**Vote for One Candidate Only**

Mark an (X) in the right-hand box next to the name of the candidate you wish to vote for.




## Useful Resources and Websites

Apathy is Boring.

[www.apathyisboring.com](http://www.apathyisboring.com)

### Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

- Find Your Voice – An Aboriginal Youth Civic Engagement Project  
[www.abo-peoples.org/find-your-voice-english-toolkit/](http://www.abo-peoples.org/find-your-voice-english-toolkit/)

### Elections Canada Website

- Information for Aboriginal Voters on the Electoral Process available in multiple Aboriginal languages  
[www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=abo/info&document=index&lang=e](http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=abo/info&document=index&lang=e)
- Aboriginal Voters  
[www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=abo&document=index&lang=e](http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=abo&document=index&lang=e)
- Young Voters  
[www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=yth&document=index&lang=e](http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=yth&document=index&lang=e)

### National Association of Friendship Centres

[www.nafc.ca](http://www.nafc.ca)

### National Congress of American Indians

- Native Vote  
[www.nativevote.org/profiles/blogs/native-vote-psas-made-by-you](http://www.nativevote.org/profiles/blogs/native-vote-psas-made-by-you)  
[www.nativevote.org/](http://www.nativevote.org/)

### Native Women's Association of Canada

[www.nwac.ca](http://www.nwac.ca)

### Nunavut Literacy Council

- Elections Toolkit  
[en.copian.ca/library/learning/elect-tk/elect-tk.pdf](http://en.copian.ca/library/learning/elect-tk/elect-tk.pdf)

### Rock the Vote Canada

- [www.rocktheotecanada.ca/](http://www.rocktheotecanada.ca/)

### Student Vote

- [www.studentvote.ca/home.php](http://www.studentvote.ca/home.php)

### UNICEF

- Know Your Rights: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous Adolescents  
[www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/files/HRBAP\\_UN\\_Rights\\_Indig\\_Peoples.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/files/HRBAP_UN_Rights_Indig_Peoples.pdf)

## Glossary

(Adapted from Elections Canada)

**Advance voting:** Voting that is held before the regular polling for people who cannot make it to the regular polling.

**Ballot:** A piece of paper containing the options people can vote for and a place to make their decision. This paper is kept confidential.

**Band council election:** Elections held by First Nations people to select their chief and council for their territory. Band council elections can be done by following the *Indian Act*, or a First Nations community can opt out of the *Indian Act* requirements and can create their own election system.

**Bill:** A new law or changes to an existing law that are proposed to Parliament.

**By-election:** When there is a vacancy in the House of Commons and there is no general election, a by-election is held to fill the vacancy.

**Canada Elections Act:** The law that orders how federal elections happen.

**Candidate:** A person who seeks election to public office.

**Chief Electoral Officer:** The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for the management of federal elections and referendums.

**Civic engagement:** When the general population gets involved with the well-being of their community in a way that shows democratic values.

**Elections Canada:** Also known as the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. An agency not connected to any political party that manages federal elections, by-elections and referendums.

**Electoral district:** Also called a riding. These are regions where voters choose their representative in government. There are 308 ridings, each with one member of Parliament.

**Empowerment:** Actions someone does to help another person to take more control over their own life.

**Enfranchisement:** To include a group of people previously excluded from voting.

**Federal election:** When members of the House of Commons are elected. The government is formed by the political party that has the confidence of a majority of the members of Parliament in the House of Commons.

**First-past-the-post:** This is an election system where the individual with the most votes in a riding (or riding) is elected.

**Franchise:** The right to vote.

**General election:** An election held in ridings nationwide at the same time.

**House of Commons:** This is a part of the Parliament of Canada. It is a group of elected representatives that debate and pass legislation for the rest of Canada.

**Member of Parliament:** Also known as an MP. An elected representative in the House of Commons who represents the voters from his or her riding.

**National Register of Electors:** A database of eligible voters for federal elections and referendums in Canada.

**Nomination contest:** A competition to determine a party's candidate in a riding.

**Party platform:** The actions that a political party commits to do if elected.

**Polling station:** The place where people go to vote. It is specific to their residential address.

**Referendum:** An electoral event on a specific issue where there is only a yes or no option.

**Representative democracy:** Selecting individuals to represent groups in making decisions at different levels of government.

**Riding:** See "Electoral district."

**Self-determination (sovereignty):** This is the right of a people to choose their own government and have control over their land and resources.

**United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:** The UN Declaration explains how the rights of Indigenous peoples – including young Indigenous women – are to be protected by governments around the world. It applies to Indigenous peoples as individuals and as a group. It recognizes the wide range of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous peoples.

**Voter:** Also known as an elector. A Canadian citizen who is 18 or over.

**Voting area:** A division of a riding that groups usually no more than 400 registered voters.

**Voting officer:** An election official at a voting station who has been appointed by the local Elections Canada office.

**Voter Information Card:** A card that voters are sent by mail that includes where and when they can cast their ballot on election day or at advance polls.

**Voting station:** The location of ballot boxes and where people go to vote. There are hundreds of voting stations per federal riding.

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## Endnotes

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