

GUIDE to the BCCLA Citizenship Handbook

Chapter 5: Making the Democratic Process Work for You

Chapter 5 is the core of *The BCCLA Citizenship Handbook*. If there is one idea that we want to emphasize to the people who read the *Handbook* it is this:

Participate with others in the democratic life of your community to support what is good and to change what is wrong.

In this chapter, we focus on ways ordinary citizens can influence the various levels of government to help bring about changes to laws and to government policies and programs. We discuss how to become involved with public issues and the community groups that focus on them. We suggest ways to organize an effective community group and to enlist the support of government officials and others to do something about the issues that concern you.

The stories in *Making a Difference* (pages 94 through 101) are about real people in B. C. who have influenced their communities by becoming involved with public issues.

Encourage your class or group to talk about people in their own communities who have worked together to change something. Success is never assured (see p 82).

Never the less, we believe that people who work with their fellow citizens to solve a problem *always* receive some benefit- even if it is just the community spirit that develops during the effort. That alone is better than letting apathy, pessimism, fear, or laziness keep you away from the public arena, and may in the long run prove the most important factor for a successful community campaign.

Activity 5.0

Materials: Make copies of Handout 5.0 for everyone.

Immigrant Settlement Groups: Translate Handout 5.0 into the home language of your group, make copies, and hand them out.

If you are using a translated version of *The Citizenship Handbook*, follow the activities described in the column to the right (this page). Otherwise, go over the goals with your group to be sure they understand what they will be learning about in their upcoming meetings.

Goals

Activity Overview and Directions: The Goals handout for each chapter introduces participants to the issues they will focus on during their work on the chapter. Draw their attention to the appropriate chapter in *The Citizenship Handbook*, and encourage them to browse through it, noting any issues that they want explained or find particularly interesting. Suggest that they raise these issues during appropriate chapter activities.

If possible, make photocopies of the Goals handout on heavier than usual paper - perhaps 'card' stock if available. When you finish a chapter, bring all chapter handouts together, with the Goals handout on top. Staple the handouts together, or put them in a folder or binder. This gives your students or group members a handy way to save, and to review, the material from each chapter.

Activity 5.1

Introductory Activity

Materials: Make 10 (or more) copies of Handout 5.1

Immigrant Settlement Groups: This activity can be conducted entirely in the home language of your group *unless* they decide to seek signatures from outside their language community.

This activity is meant to be more than a token gesture toward participation. The petition should ask for a realistic event or action, and be directed to the people who can bring about that event or action. Be sure that your group or class finds out what happens to their petition.

Examples:

"We, the students signing this petition,

- ask Mr. Patterson to take our class on a trip to the Robson Street courthouse so that we can watch a real trial. "
- or
- "ask the teaching staff to help us organize a school-wide collection of canned goods for the local food bank."

Participate !

Activity Overview: In this activity, the participants create a petition to propose an event or activity related to their class or group, or a petition to take a stand on a local community issue. They then get as many signatures as possible on their petitions and present the signed petition to the proper authority. This is a small, but potentially practical introduction to civic participation.

If your students or group members are enthusiastic, you might even do both - a class -related petition and a community focused one. Working with a class- or group-related petition, participants are dealing with people they know in familiar surroundings. This is like a 'test' case situation, in which they can explain the petition and ask for signatures in a relatively stress-free environment. They could then move on to an issue of public concern in the community, collecting signatures from outside their own setting.

Activity Directions:

Petition for a class or group activity

- Divide participants into 3 or 4 small groups. Distribute Handout 5.1 to each group.
- Ask the groups to decide on an activity or event they wish to propose, and to write a petition supporting their proposal. (Focus them on potential speakers, fieldtrips, or special events. See examples in shaded box to the left.)
- Bring everyone back together, and ask each group to explain what it wants to propose with its petition.
- Vote on these proposals, choosing one for the class or group to support. (If they propose an event or activity that affects other classes and groups, they will have a larger number of people to approach for signatures.)

[continued on next page]

Activity 5.1

Introductory Activity (continued)

Example:*Petition for New ESL Activity in School Program:*

"To the Staff Members of the ESL-for-Adults Program at Local Community School:

"We, the ESL students who sign this petition, ask the ESL-for-Adults staff to work with us to create a new 'Civic Awareness' section in our ESL program. We propose the following plan for this new section: (1) all adult ESL students in the school will meet together once a month during school hours; and (2) a different class at each monthly meeting will introduce and interview local people involved with community issues.

In this way, we ESL students will gain a wider knowledge of our community and will have additional experience in conversation and public speaking in English."

- With the class, finalize the wording of the petition. Class or group members can then sign the petition and, if appropriate, make copies and circulate them to get other valid signatures.
- Send or take the petition to the proper person or office.
- Follow-up on the petition in whatever way you think is most useful.

Petition supporting a community issue or action

- Assist the participants in choosing a local issue to support with a petition. Concentrate on public issues that are current and of real interest to your group or class. (Such a petition may become widely known in the community. Be sure there will be no harmful repercussions for your students or group members, for your employer, or for those who sign the petition.)
- Work together to write up the petition and make copies for all members of the class or group.
- After one week during which the participants ask people to sign the petition, staple all copies together (possibly with a cover letter) and send them to the appropriate person or place.
- Follow-up on the petition in whatever way you think is most useful.

Activity 5.2 - A and B

Materials: Make copies of Handouts 5.2A and 5.2B for each participant

Immigrant Settlement Group: Translate both handouts and proceed as described in the Activity Directions, this page, right column.

Remember: Do not give out the Vocabulary Resource (5.2B) until after your participants have worked together to define the words on the Vocabulary List (5.2A), and you have discussed their definitions with them.

Working Together

Vocabulary List and Vocabulary Resource

Activity Overview: Chapter 5 has two different vocabulary lists. This one, 'Working Together', is the more general one. Most of the words relate to activities people become involved in when they work together to solve a problem or to promote a program or event.

These words are quite straight-forward. Unlike some of the vocabulary words studied so far, this group does not require extra material for teachers and settlement group leaders. Thus the Vocabulary Resource for them (see next page) is the same as the one for the participants (see Handout 5.2B).

If you want your class or group to use the vocabulary words in sentences, encourage them to use *The Citizenship Handbook* to find examples and to get ideas. As well, the next activity (5.3) focuses on activities and situations that reflect what the vocabulary words mean.

Activity Directions: In the Introduction to this GUIDE, we suggest several ways to introduce vocabulary words and to encourage participants to learn their meanings. (see Introduction, beginning on page v.) Whichever method you use, begin by distributing Handout 2.2A to everyone. They will use it as they work by themselves or with others to come up with definitions for the words on the handout. Be sure they have it with them when you lead the group session in which they discuss and refine their definitions.

Activity 5.2B

Working Together
Vocabulary Resource

1. to participate to take part in an activity - for example, to work in the community with a group of people who have interests like yours (on many pages throughout the chapter)
2. opinion what you think about something. Your opinion is usually more respected if you support it with good reasons. (pp 79, 83)
3. political party a group of people who have the same political ideas and goals. The current most active political parties in Canada (as of February, 2002) are the Bloc Quebecois, the Canadian Alliance, the Liberals, the New Democrats and the Progressive Conservatives. (p 78)
4. to influence to use your political, financial, or moral power to help control what is happening, or to make things happen the way you want them to (pp 77, 78)
5. to organize to set up a way to do things (pp 79, 83, 85)
6. publicity actions taken to let the public know about an idea or a plan (p 85)
7. to lobby to visit politicians and try to persuade them to do something you think should be done. Some people do this as their job. (p 91)
8. petition a written request for action, given to the government or others, and signed by people who support the request (p 84)
9. demonstration a group of people acting together in public to show their support for or to protest against government or other activities (pp 79, 86)
10. *Charter* challenge a court action started by people who think the government has done something that the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* does not allow (p 92)

Activity 5.3

Materials: Copies of Handout 5.3 for everyone.

Immigrant Settlement Group:

If time permits, the group leader can translate Handout 5.3 for everyone. Otherwise, the leader can translate the examples orally - one at a time - during the group meeting, and group members can decide which vocabulary word best fits the example.

Homework suggestion: Ask your group members to bring to the next meeting a newspaper story, a notice, or a brochure that talks about people working together for their community.

Answers: Vocabulary Review:

1. (H) opinion
2. (C) influence
3. (J) participate
4. (E) organize
5. (B) publicity
6. (I) lobby
7. (A) petition
8. (G) demonstration
9. (D) political party
10. (F) Charter challenge

Participating in Your Community

Vocabulary Review

Activity Overview: Activity 5.3 is a review of the vocabulary words, but not one based directly on their definitions. Rather, participants match the vocabulary words with practical examples of what the words mean.

This activity will have further practical meaning if you tie the examples in with similar activities in your own community. Some newspapers have a whole page dedicated to community activities. Public libraries often have newsletters and brochures about local neighbourhood groups and activities. A field trip to the closest library may well be a part of your program. If so, participants can collect brochures and other information about community activities and local opportunities to participate in community life.

Activity Directions:

- Distribute Handout 5.3 to everyone. Split the group into pairs, and assign each pair 4 to 6 of the numbered examples, making sure that all examples are covered.
- Ask the pairs to read the examples to each other, and to choose the appropriate vocabulary words.
- When everyone is finished, call them together, go over the answers and include relevant local examples whenever possible.
- If you have included the suggested Homework in your program, be sure to set aside time for class or group members to tell everyone about the information they found.

Activity 5.4 - A or B

Materials: Copies of Handout 5.4A for all participants

Immigrant Settlement Group:
We suggest you use Handout 5.4B - translated into the appropriate language - for this activity. The content of 5.4A and 5.4B is the same, but Activity 5.4B is more interactive. It is not only a little easier, it is also more fun - especially for an informal group.

Directions for 5.4B are essentially the same as 5.4A, Activity Directions, this page, right column.

A logical order for the statements is set out and explained on the next page

Neighbourhood Action

Making Sense of a Neighbourhood Meeting

Activity Overview: This activity requires participants to read through a jumbled set of statements about a neighbourhood meeting, and then to put those statements in order. There are some clue words or phrases in the statements ("at the start of the meeting" or "at the second meeting", for example). But most of the clues about sentence order come from thinking logically about how things at the meeting would happen.

The content of this story is only suggestive of issues that might affect a neighbourhood. The activity will be more useful if participants have a chance to discuss issues from their own neighbourhoods once they have finished putting the sentences in order. Try to locate brochures to give them about police sponsored neighbourhood watch programs and any other safety programs in their community. They might also be interested in a neighbourhood watch presentation by the local police.

Activity Directions:

- Divide the class into small groups of 3, 4 or 5 people. When they all have copies of the handout, ask different people to read the story and the directions out loud.
- Ask someone to read the statement with the (1) in front of it. Then ask them all to find the statement that should come next. This is quite easy, because one statement begins "At the start of the meeting . . .". When you all agree that this is the next statement, ask everyone to put a #2 in front of it.
- Point out that statement #2 implies that people will 'tell' something they know about making neighbourhoods safer. Ask everyone to look for those 'clues' and to work in their groups to finish putting the remaining statements in order.
- When everyone is finished, go through the story, asking different groups what statements they put next and why.

Activity 5.4 - A or B

Neighbourhood Action

(continued)

The order of the statements after (2) are as follows:

- Surjeet Gill and Bill MacDonald both tell something they know about making neighbourhoods safer. "Surjeet Gill told about a friend. . . ." and "Bill MacDonald said if they had street lights . . .". These statements will be numbers (3) and (4). (It does not matter which is which.)
- Now that Bill and Surjeet have said something, the next logical statement begins "After hearing Bill and Surjeet, the people at the meeting . . .". So that is statement (5).
- Statement (5) says that the people want more information. In the next two statements, (6) and (7), Bill and Surjeet tell how they will get that information. "Bill agreed to contact . . ." and "Surjeet said she would ask . . .". (Again, it does not logically matter which is which.)
- The group will need to hear what Surjeet and Bill learn. Thus, the statement that begins "Everyone decided they should have another meeting . . ." is (8).
- Statement (9) sets up the next meeting: "The Wongs and their neighbours set a date. . .".
- And finally, the statement beginning " At the second meeting . . ." tells what happened at that meeting, and becomes statement (10).

Activity 5.4B

Neighbourhood Action

Materials: Copies of Handout 5.4B for each small group, with the sets of statements cut into separate strips

Immigrant Settlement Group: Translate Handout 5.4B and proceed as described in the Activity Directions (previous page, right column). You do not have to number the separate strips unless that makes it easier to keep them in the proper order.

The only difference between 5.4A and 5.4B is that in 5.4B the statements are on strips of paper that are cut apart and physically rearranged to form the proper order. This is an interactive variation of the activity, and probably a little easier and more fun. Participants can follow the progress of the meeting visually as they arrange the statements in order. Be sure the groups work separately, however, and don't just copy the order they can see another group using.

Activity 5.5 - A and B

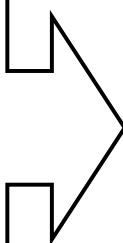
Materials: Copies of Handouts 5.5A and 5.5B for each participant

Immigrant Settlement Group: Translate both handouts and proceed as described in the Activity Directions, this page, right column.

Remember: Do not give out the Vocabulary Resource (5.5B) until after your participants have worked together to define the words on the Vocabulary List (5.5A), and you have discussed their definitions with them.

Role-play :

To help participants become comfortable using these vocabulary words, we have included a role-playing exercise where they use the words in the context of a meeting.



Planning for Community Action

Vocabulary List and Vocabulary Resource

Activity Overview: The words in this second Chapter 5 vocabulary list describe a number of the people and the activities that are usual at community group meetings. As in the earlier list (Activity 5.2A), these words are straight-forward and do not require additional explanatory material in the Vocabulary Resource for teachers and settlement counselors. Thus the Vocabulary Resource in this GUIDE (Activity 5.5B) is the same as the one for participants (Handout 5.5B).

Activity Directions: In the Introduction to this GUIDE, we suggest several ways to introduce vocabulary words and to encourage participants to learn their meanings (see Introduction, page v and following.) Whichever method you use, begin by distributing Handout 5.5A to everyone. They will use it as they work by themselves or with others to come up with definitions for the words on the handout. Be sure they have it with them when you lead the group session in which they discuss and refine their definitions.

Role-play exercise: Split your class or group into smaller groups of at least 3 people each, and preferably 4 or 5. Give each group one of the lists below, and ask them to create a short role-play about a meeting, using the words in their list.

List 1

volunteer
chairperson
controversial issue
strategy
compromise

List 2

public interest group
chairperson
agenda
controversial issue
consensus

List 3

community group
volunteer
consensus
fund raise
strategy

List 4

citizens' group
controversial issue
compromise
spokesperson
volunteer

Activity 5.5B***Planning for Community Action*****Vocabulary Resource**

1. citizens' group,
public interest group,
or community group
(pp 78, 79) three names for groups of people who join together to work on issues that are important to the public - the community as a whole - and not just one or two people.
2. volunteer (p 101) a person who does something to help members of the community or to make the community a better place, but does not get paid to do it
3. chairperson (p 85) the person who runs (is in charge of) a meeting
4. agenda (p 85) a list, or plan, of what will be discussed at a meeting
5. strategy (p 79) a plan of action; the steps you will take to solve a problem
6. controversial
issue (pp 80, 83) an issue that gives rise to many strong and different, even opposing, opinions
7. consensus general agreement among a group of people
8. compromise (p 96) a situation where all parties in a controversy give up some of their demands so that they can work together to support the issues on which they agree
9. fund raising (p 85) finding ways to get money to pay for the activities and programs of a community group
10. spokesperson (p 87) someone who is chosen by a group to speak for it at public meetings and to the media. The spokesperson makes sure the media know about the group's activities.

Activity 5.6 - A or B

Materials: Copies of Handout 5.6A5a or 5.6B for everyone

Immigrant Settlement Groups:

Translate and make copies of whichever handout - 5.6A or 5.6B - you want your group to use. You can then proceed with the activity as described in the Activity Directions, this page, right column.

Or, you can read the handout, translating orally as you proceed, and let your group members supply the correct words as you come to them.

Preparation re Handout 5.6B:

If you choose to use this handout, make sure you understand how a ward system works. For a basic description, see page 55 of *The Citizenship Handbook*. In a ward system, each ward elects a representative to city council. That person is especially accountable to the ward residents, who will vote for someone else next time if this representative does not do a good job, or ignores their interests. When city council members are elected at large, everyone in the city votes to elect all the council members. This can mean that some parts of the city get little attention because council members don't need those votes to get elected, and may have little interest in those areas.

A Community Meeting

Vocabulary Review

Activity Overview: In this vocabulary review, the vocabulary words are missing from a narrative about a community meeting (5.6A) or about local community action (5.6B). The participants fill in the blanks in the narratives by inserting the appropriate vocabulary words. The participants will have to understand the meanings of the vocabulary words in order to fill in the blanks successfully.

Two different narratives are offered. The story in Handout 5.6A is more rural in nature and involves a local environmental group. The story in Handout 5.6B is urban in nature, and has a political orientation. Both, however, talk about community action that grows out of the concerns and interests of just a few citizens. Helping students understand that a few people can make a difference is an important part of this activity.

Activity Directions:

- Use this activity as homework or as an in-class individual or pairs exercise.
- For an in-class pairs activity, divide the class into pairs and ask them to read individual paragraphs to each other, filling in the proper words.
- When everyone has completed the exercise in the manner you have chosen, go over the answers with the whole group. Ask them to tell about community groups in which they participate or have an interest.

Answers: Handout 5.6A - community group; volunteer; agenda; chairperson; controversial; compromise; fund raising; consensus; strategy; spokesperson.

Answers: Handout 5.6B- consensus; controversial; strategy; citizens' group; compromise; chairperson; volunteer; agenda; fund raising; spokesperson.

Activity 5.7

Materials: make copies of Handout 5.7 for all participants.

Immigrant Settlement Group: translate Handout 5.7 and do the activity as described in Activity Directions, this page, column right, using a translated version of *The Citizenship Handbook*.

Preparation: Before assigning this activity to an ESL class, check Chapter 5 of the *Citizenship Handbook* to make sure the language level is appropriate for your class.

Participating in Canada's Democracy: Reading for Details

Activity Overview: This activity is a straight-forward reading exercise that requires participants to use the information on pages 77 through 93 of *The Citizenship Handbook* to fill in the blanks in the sentences. The page references are to the pages in the *Handbook* where the answers can be found.

The information about political parties on page 78 of the *Handbook* is outdated. Federal parties now include: the Liberal Party, the Canadian Alliance Party, the New Democratic Party, the Bloc Quebecois, the Green Party, the Progressive Conservative Party and others. [June 2002]

Activity Directions: Use this activity wherever it fits best into your program - as an introductory open book exercise done singly or in pairs, as a homework assignment, or at the end of your sessions, as an open-book review.

Appropriate ways to fill in the blanks:

1. federal, provincial, and local (p 77)
2. Liberal, NDP, Canadian Alliance, Progressive Conservative, Green or Bloc Quebecois (p 78)
3. newspapers and news magazines - news on the radio - public meetings. (p 80)
4. Possible answers are these (p 83)
 - (a) find a group working on the same issue
 - (b) contact citizens with similar concerns
 - (c) place ads in newspapers
 - (d) put posters in community centres
 - (e) establish contact with influential members of your community
5. These can be expressed in different ways: (pp 85-87)
 - (a) organize activities and members very well
 - (b) do fund-raising
 - (c) find a good chairperson to organize efficient meetings
 - (d) publicize your efforts to get members, political and media attention
 - (e) hold public meetings to raise money and publicize your activities
 - (f) use non-violent public demonstrations to put pressure on the government
- (g) develop a plan for working with the media
- (h) use opposition parties to bring your concerns to governments and the media
6. Here are some possible answers: (pp 88 - 89)
 - (a) the Minister or Deputy Minister in the relevant agency
 - (b) an influential person in the government agency who has authority to change things
 - (c) your local MLA or MP
 - (d) for local issues, your locally elected representatives
 - (e) a sympathetic member of the civil service
7. Answers can be in any order: (pp 92 - 93)
 - (a) going to court is expensive
 - (b) going to court takes a long time
 - cases take a long time to prepare and bring to court, and
 - Canadian courts are full, so court dates are set way in advance
 - (c) going to court is frustrating -
 - government lawyers may delay the case and drain your resources;
 - even if you win, the government will likely appeal

Activity 5.8

Materials: Make copies of Handout 5.8 for everyone.

Immigrant Settlement Group:

If your group does everything in their home language, this is not an appropriate activity unless you want to create your own puzzle using the translated words. The translated definitions will of course have to have new numbers to fit your new puzzle.

Another possibility is to translate the definitions page, hand it out to the group, and have them match the definitions with the appropriate English words. As they decide on the proper English word for each definition, they can put it into its numbered place on the Handout 5.8 puzzle. In this way, the review becomes a language learning exercise as well.

PUZZLE ANSWERS: DOWN

2. petition
3. [charter] challenge
4. influence
7. opinion
10. spokesperson
12. volunteer
13. [citizens'] group
14. Federal
16. strategy
17. [fund] raising
19. MLA
20. lobby

Participating in the Democratic Process

Chapter Review Puzzle

Activity Overview: This crossword puzzle is based on the two vocabulary lists in Chapter 5. It is a useful review of the chapter content, as well as an interesting way to focus again on the vocabulary words. The puzzle can be an individual homework assignment. In class, it is probably most appropriate as a pairs activity. The clues, or definitions, are not always worded exactly the same way as the definitions given in the Vocabulary Resources. If the participants have learned the vocabulary words, however, they should have no trouble figuring out which word matches the puzzle clues.

Activity Directions:

- Divide you class into two teams, Team A and Team B. Join one A person with one B person until the whole class is in A/B pairs.
- Give everyone Handout 5.8. In their pairs, A works on numbers 1 - 12, and B works on numbers 13 - 24. When they complete their own parts, they will help each other complete the puzzle.
- When the pairs are mostly finished, split them up, putting Team A on one side of the room, and Team B on the other. They will compete (without their Handouts) to fill in a master puzzle.
- You will be the game master, and will go through the puzzle, asking first a Team A member, and then a Team B member for the words to fill in the puzzle. If one team gives an incorrect answer, the other team can try. The team that identifies the greater number of words wins the contest (it will probably be a tie!)

PUZZLE ANSWERS: ACROSS:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. compromise | 5. fund [raising] |
| 6. organize | 8. court |
| 9. participate | 11. demonstration |
| 12. vote | 15. chairperson |
| 18. publicity | 19. MP |
| 21. charter [challenge] | 22. controversial |
| 23. agenda | 24. consensus |

Chapter 5: More Opportunities for PARTICIPATION

The following activities are for classes or settlement groups who want to consider ways to encourage newcomers to vote or otherwise participate more actively in the democratic life of their communities.

Activity 5.9.

Encouraging New Canadians to Vote Small Group Discussion

Materials: Make copies of Handout 5.9 to give to each small group.

Immigrant Settlement Group:

If your group is using translated version of *The Citizenship Handbook*, you can translate Handout 5.9 for them and continue with the activity as described in Activity Directions, this page, right column.

If you do not have a *Handbook* in the group's home language, give a translated Handout 5.9 to everyone, and discuss questions 1, 2, and 3 informally. Translate orally the reasons for not voting listed on pages 99 - 100 of your copy of the *Handbook*, and ask group members what they think of those reasons. Continue to finish the activity as directed on the Handout.

Activity Overview: This activity gives your participants a chance to consider why some new Canadians do not vote in elections in Canada. Because voting is such a basic and important citizen right and responsibility, it is worth taking some extra time to think about this issue. We hope the members of your class or group will think carefully about the reasons for not voting that are given in *The Citizenship Handbook* (see pages 99 and 100.) Find out if these reasons are significant in the experience of your students or group members, or if there are other reasons that are more important.

Activity Directions:

- Divide your class or group into small groups. Make copies of Handout 5.9 for each group.
- Ask everyone to read pages 99 - 101 in *The Citizenship Handbook* and to proceed as the Handout directs. (See Handout 5.9.)
- Bring everyone back together and ask each group to describe its suggestions for encouraging newcomers to vote. List them on a black board, white board, or flip chart.
- Discuss the suggestions, and ask the class or group to choose the three that they think are the most interesting and practical.
- End by discussing what organizations in your community you would contact if you wanted someone to carry out the three suggestions. Or, continue on to the next activity.

Activity 5.10 *Promote an Event to Encourage Voting*

Class/Group Letter-writing Project

*There is **NO Handout** for students or group members for this activity. Instead, they work in small groups to write a letter to an appropriate organization, suggesting that the organization arrange a specific event to encourage new Canadians to vote.*

- (1) Ask your class or group to select an event that will encourage new Canadians to vote (see Activity 5.9). Work with them to make a list of reasons that support their choice as a practical and effective way to encourage voting among new Canadians.
- (2) Give everyone time to ask their families and others about the suggestion and about the best places to seek support. In a general discussion, choose the most appropriate organization to approach about putting on the event. Also, decide what contributions the class or group can make to the success of the event.
- (3) Use class time to prepare a letter to the chosen organization.
 - (a) First, set up small groups. Ask each group to draft a letter using the information gathered above as a basis for its content. They should describe the proposed event, point out why the organization was chosen as the best group for putting on the event, and indicate how the class or group can help with the event.
 - (b) When their first drafts are completed, the groups will review each other's letters and suggest corrections or improvements.
 - (c) They will return the 'corrected' drafts to the original writers. They will all review their own drafts with the suggested revisions, and make any changes they think are appropriate. They will make copies of their revised drafts and give them to you.
 - (d) Ask each group to choose one person to represent the group as a member of a class 'drafting committee'. The 'drafting committee' will meet at some convenient time and, using the revised drafts submitted to you, will compose a 'final' draft.
- (4) Give everyone a copy of the final draft and discuss it in class, making changes if it seems appropriate.

[continued on next page]

Activity 5.10 Class Letter Writing Project (continued)

(5) Complete an original letter (with copies) from the final draft, and mail it with any supporting materials you and your class think will be useful.

- Whether your students or group members actually persuade an appropriate group to adopt and organize the suggested event, their experience as they go through the steps of this process should be of real educational value. Let's hope - at the very least - that you get a reply from the organization that treats the issue and your suggestion as seriously as your class or group has.
- It is possible that your suggestion will be adopted and put into action by the organization you write to. That, of course, would be a great experience for everyone.
- If this doesn't happen, you might still be able to get someone from the organization to visit your class and discuss voting issues and the participation of citizens in their communities.
- Or, you may decide to take the suggestion to a different organization altogether.
- If you pursue this activity with your class or group, the B. C. Civil Liberties Association will be very interested in hearing about what happens.

Activity 5.11

Organize an Election-Related Event

Class or Group Project

This activity has NO handout for students or group members.

This activity is for an ESL class or an immigrant settlement group that wants to plan and carry out an actual event itself. The main focus is still on voting and the election process, but this gathering has social aspects as well. The object is to have group members themselves make all the decisions and do the planning and organizing of every aspect of the event. It should be something they are interested in and will enjoy.

For example: invite an elected local official to speak informally to your group or class. Do not limit yourselves to city councils; parks boards and school boards are elected as well in some places. Be sure to ask around so that you get someone who is interesting and speaks well. Invite other ESL classes or immigrant settlement groups and their families to come. Ask your speaker to talk about voting and elections in personal, as well as educational terms. Find out what prompted this person to run for office and what unusual things happened during the campaign. You want this event to be *interesting*.

In the opposite column is a sample list of activities that group or class members can organize and do. This is *their* event.

They will (1) choose whom to invite as a speaker; (2) write and send the letter of invitation; (3) identify other groups or people to invite as guests; (4) figure out how to invite them and do so; (5) find a place to have the event; (6) decide what refreshments to offer and how to provide and serve them; (7) set up the room for the event, including simple decorations; (8) decide who will moderate the event, i.e. who will welcome the speaker and the participants, who will introduce the speaker, who will run the question-and-answer part of the meeting, and who will verbally thank the speaker; (9) organize the clean-up after the meeting; (10) write a thank-you to the speaker and anyone else who was particularly helpful; and (11) whatever else you and they can think of!

Activity 5.12

Citizens Who Made a Difference

Role-play or Reading for Details

Between pages 94 and 101 of *The BCCLA Citizenship Handbook* are stories of real citizens and citizens' groups who worked in different ways to solve problems in their communities. They are the subjects of this activity.

- Make copies of Handout 5.12 for all participants and yourself.
- Divide your class or group into smaller groups.
- Assign one of the articles from pp 94 - 101 to each group.
- Assign the 'Role-Play' to some groups* and the 'Reading for Details' to others. You may need more people per group for the Role-play than you do for the Reading activity. The instructions for these activities are set out on Handout 5.12 for classes and group members
- When the groups have had time to prepare their role-plays or discussion questions (maybe even on a later day), organize the class or group to watch and discuss the role plays and to take part in a discussion led by the Reading for Details groups. Let the participants handle the discussion as much as possible.

* If the Coalition's work described on pages 96 and 97 of the *Handbook* is assigned to a role-playing group, focus the role-play on the activities of the Coalition, not the violent incident that prompted those activities. That incident can be covered in the introduction to the role play.

Activity 5.13**Make Your Own Community Resource List**

This activity has NO Handout for students or group members.

An excellent resource for ESL students and immigrant settlement groups is a list of local community groups and government agencies with program descriptions and contact numbers attached.

- Some community groups and government agencies are listed in your local telephone directories in the community services pages.
- Larger cities have more comprehensive information about community services in books such as the *Red Book of Social Services* in the Lower Mainland.
- Handbooks and brochures produced by the federal and provincial governments for new citizens list many agencies and some community groups, often with translated versions in many languages.
- These practical resources, however, may be too cumbersome for your class or group, and they may not be in the languages that many of your students or group members use at home.

If the information about services and activities in your community does not meet the needs of your class or group, you can put a community resource list together as a class or group project. Here are some suggestions to help you get started.

- (1) Your class or group can look up community agencies in the telephone directory in the 'community service pages'.
- (2) They can contact community centres, local community groups, and the public library to gather further information about what groups are active in their community.
- (3) They can go to immigrant settlement agencies and collect additional information, including some that has been translated already into different languages.

- (4) An ESL class can produce a list in English of the agencies and community groups that they think are most important for their families to know about. They can make copies of the list for their class and other classes in their school.
- (5) An immigrant settlement group can produce a list in their home language. They can supplement the list with brochures that they have collected in the same language.
- (6) The list will be most useful if it has names of groups and agencies, their addresses and essential descriptions, and a contact number.