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# NOTES

This tumultuous year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

Headquartered in New York City, the United Nations was formed in the aftermath of the Second World War. Its predecessor, the League of Nations, was similarly formed after the conclusion of the First World War. For both, the purpose of coming together focused on the intention of maintaining global peace and security.

To have nations work together to solve problems on such a mass scale that a multi-lateral, global response was required. Originally, resolving conflict seemed to lurk behind the logic of such an organization. Over time, however, the UN has proven to be and is, so much more. It has 193 member countries and tackles important issues such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health emergencies, gender equality, governance, food production, and more.

We are very pleased to present this special issue entirely dedicated to exploring the many important aspects and roles the UN plays in global affairs. For your interest, we present a wide range of articles and information, breaking down elements and initiatives of the UN into manageable, digestible chunks. Included too, as usual is a ready-to-go lesson plan in the CURRICULA section of the magazine that explores the fundamentals of the UN and its importance to citizens in their daily lives.



Model UN and examining articles pertaining to the rights of the child. Other coverage includes writing about and interviewing Canadian ambassadors to the UN and their perceptions of its role and importance;

the importance of the World Health Organization, especially relevant in these pandemic-defining times; the role and relevance of peacekeeping; assessing the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and the role and importance of the Security Council, among others. The content in this issue is both substantive and relevant and will help you integrate this topic into classroom-based instruction.

Please regard what we present to you here as a teaching aid and resource.

We are also extremely grateful to the federal government, the Department of Canadian Heritage, Commemoration Branch, for generously providing the resources to enable us to accomplish this worthwhile task.

Enjoy this special issue. We look forward to hearing from you.

Until next time,

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# Inventing Global Cooperation: A Brief History of the United Nations

By Carolyn Gruske

If the United Nations didn't exist, it would have to be invented. While that sounds like a resolution for a debate, it's actually a conclusion that students of all ages are likely to form once they start learning about the organization's history and purpose. At least, that's the opinion expressed by more than one UN expert.

While the UN wasn't established until after the Second World War, Marcel Jesenský, a history professor at the University of Ottawa, says that when he introduces the subject of UN history he refers back to much earlier events—to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was the time of the industrial revolution and the era when it was becoming easier for goods, services, and commerce to flow across international borders thanks to telegraph and railway lines, and particularly the 1874 Universal Postal Union (UPU), which created the rules that governed the handling of international mail. (Since 1948, the UPU has been a specialized agency of the UN.)

“This is the origin: international co-operation through an international organization, and the UN is more than a modern take on this idea. It's the most global one, as it's all-encompassing,” Jesenský says. “Going back and looking at the need for international co-operation beyond borders is something that makes a lot of sense, especially these days. I think that's something kids can relate to, especially if you're looking at something like the [current COVID-19] pandemic.”

Beyond that, Jesenský also points to Internet connectivity standards as well as climate change and environmental concerns as easy entry points for introducing even young students to the role international organizations like the UN play in world affairs. “Air pollution does not recognize borders. Neither do sea pollution and water issues.”

Joan Broughton, public information officer for the United Nations Association in Canada, a charitable organization with the mandate to inform and educate Canadians about the UN (including both its successes and failures), also believes that giving students examples of international co-operation highlights how and why the UN and its agencies came into existence and why they are still in operation. She also likes using the UPU as an example, but she is equally happy to point out a UN agency with Canadian roots.

“The International Civil Aviation Organization, one of the UN's specialized agencies, happens to be headquartered in Montreal.” She explains that its operations are “central to the fact that there are accepted international norms which govern the methodologies of flight patterns and the rules of engagement of the aviation world.”



1939-1945



1914-1918



1800s





1945



1920-1946



1874



Broughton cites other examples that also serve to highlight what international co-operation can accomplish—and that might resonate with students—including programs run by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In fact, even if the UN were to disappear today, 17 of its specialized agencies, which are independent entities, would continue to exist and to carry on with their missions.

Getting students to understand first the role the UN plays in the world and the need for international co-operation is one step. Explaining to them that the UN is more than just the General Assembly and the Security Council—two of the UN's very political arms that tend to get lots of news coverage—is the second one. Teaching its history and the role that Canada has played throughout can be a much more complicated endeavour.

As mentioned earlier, the UN got its start after the Second World War, and was created, in large part, to prevent a similar global conflict from occurring again. It was not, however, the first time an international organization had arisen from the ashes of war. The League of Nations was founded in 1920 to be a body that worked for world peace after the First World War. Whether a teacher brings up these historical elements in class, however, depends on a number of factors including the grade level being taught and the amount of time devoted to teaching about the UN.

“Maybe in senior high school it's important to show antecedents and that there would be no United Nations if there hadn't been a League of Nations that failed, so if you're teaching Grade 11 or 12, I think you want to mention that because the UN didn't just come out of nowhere. But I think at a younger level, the real story of Canada and the UN is the way that the Canadian identity is, in some ways, tied up in the UN and what it's supposed to stand for.... You don't really have to go back before 1945,” says Adam Chapnick, a professor of defence studies at the Canadian Forces College (CFC), which is part of the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC).

While Canada might not be the most important player on the international stage today, its status post-world war was a bit more prominent, and that reputation made it a welcomed founding member of the UN. “In many ways, our national foreign policy presence has kind of paralleled that of the UN, although there are some interesting differences,” says Daniel Gorman, a professor in the department of history and the Balsillie Schools of International Affairs at the University of Waterloo.

“Immediately after the Second World War, Canada is not a great power, but it's actually one of the most significant influential powers because so many of the defeated powers are not part of the UN.... Canada actually had the fourth largest military contribution to the Allied victory, so even though we were much smaller than the United States or the Soviet Union, we were still sort of a major middle power. Canada had an outsized presence in the UN's early years in terms of the number of Canadians working for the UN and playing leadership roles in UN bodies.”

One Canadian who left his mark on the UN right from the start was John Peter Humphrey. In 1946, the human rights advocate became the first director of the United Nations Division of Human Rights. He also wrote the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Chapnick adds that putting in the effort to do things like writing declarations or negotiating behind the scenes or attempting to bring nations together translated into Canada becoming influential at the UN.

## UN SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

These are organizations that fall under the UN's umbrella but are legally independent of it, with separate budgets, members and governing rules.



**International Monetary Fund (IMF)**  
Washington, DC, USA



**International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)**  
Montreal, Canada



**UNWTO**

**World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**  
Madrid, Spain



**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**  
Paris, France



**WORLD BANK GROUP**

**World Bank Group**  
Washington, DC, USA

**International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**

**International Development Association (IDA)**

**International Finance Corporation (IFC)**



**International Maritime Organization (IMO)**  
London, UK



**Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**  
Rome, Italy



**International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**  
Rome, Italy



**International Labour  
Organization (ILO)**  
Geneva, Switzerland



**World Intellectual  
Property Organization (WIPO)**  
Geneva, Switzerland



**World Meteorological  
Organization (WMO)**  
Geneva, Switzerland



**Universal Postal  
Union (UPU)**  
Bern, Switzerland



**International  
Telecommunication Union (ITU)**  
Geneva, Switzerland



**World Health  
Organization (WHO)**  
Geneva, Switzerland



**United Nations  
Industrial Development  
Organization (UNIDO)**  
Vienna, Austria





Hon. Paul Martin and Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King attending the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly, 23 October 1946

“Particularly in the 1950s, Canada had a reputation at the UN as a country that, while it was on the Western side in the Cold War, was genuinely committed to making the UN work. The stereotype that Canadians already get along with everybody isn’t always true, but in the ’50s, it really was. We could talk to anybody. We were willing to do all the tasks at the UN that nobody else wanted.... That attitude really resonated around the international community at the time, which meant that if people didn’t agree with us, they were still willing to listen to us,” he says.

That approach is one that Paul Martin Senior—the father of Prime Minister Paul Martin Junior—capitalized on while the UN underwent expansion talks in the mid-1950s. With more countries wanting and able to join, there was a tug-of-war between the US-led western countries and the Soviet-led Eastern Bloc ones about which nations to admit. Martin spearheaded an agreement that promoted a one-for-one balance: the same number of western allies and Soviet satellites would be permitted to join.

Of course, adding more countries diluted the dominance of existing General Assembly members and

that slowly eroded Canada’s influence at the UN. In the mid-1950s, however, Canada still had a strong role to play in creating one of the things the UN is best known for: peacekeeping.

The Suez Crisis of 1956 was triggered when Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser seized control of the waterway that links the Mediterranean and the Red Seas. Although owned by a British and French company, the canal was built by Egyptian workers. The British were worried that the Egyptians would stem the shipment of oil through the canal, while the Egyptians wanted to use the shipping tolls generated by the canal to pay for domestic initiatives.

The situation escalated as both sides began lining up allies, with Britain and France turning to Israel and Egypt to the Soviet Union. On October 29, as part of their plan, Israeli forces advanced. Britain and France called for peace (hoping that Egypt would withdraw along with Israel) and things would go back to normal. Egypt, however, didn’t fall for the ruse, so on October 31, Britain and France attacked and dropped bombs on Egyptian airfields. The Middle East, and possibly the rest of the world, was on the brink of war.

Lester B. Pearson, the Secretary of State for External Affairs at the time, was tasked with leading Canada’s response at the UN. Pearson devised the idea of a Canada-led peacekeeping force, and his proposal was adopted on November 4. Even though Britain and France ignored the UN’s wishes and sent troops to the canal the following day, a ceasefire was quickly arranged on November 6, with peacekeepers—officially known as the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF)—arriving shortly thereafter, under the command of Canadian General E.L.M. Burns. The next year, Pearson was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

“The Cold War divided the world into two camps... One could say the Suez Crisis and Lester B. Pearson’s ideas of moderating and separating two opposing parties changed this starting paradigm of East and West, adding the Third World and new perspectives,” says Jesenský.

While peacekeeping may be the most dramatic and action-packed of the UN’s typical endeavours, making speeches to the General Assembly is the exact opposite, but there are times when strong oratory performances can change the world, and according to Chapnick, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was responsible for one of these.

In 1985, Mulroney addressed the General Assembly and spoke about apartheid in South Africa. Countries like the United Kingdom and the United States had refused to take political action, and African nations were left to feel they had no support in the West. Mulroney, in contrast, proclaimed to the world that Canada was ready to cut diplomatic ties and impose economic sanctions.

“We still had a reputation, at the time, of mattering. In other words, if Canada says it’s going to act on apartheid, people do actually notice,” says Chapnick. “Is it the reason South Africa changes its policy? Absolutely not, but it does give other countries the confidence to continue pushing forward on sanctions against the regime and give [other nearby] African states... faith that there will be help... because the biggest challenge with sanctions is they tend to hurt neighbouring countries.”

Although Mulroney was able to exert his influence in a time period that can easily be measured in minutes, that’s not typically the way things work at the UN. Louise Arbour, for example spent years working on behalf of both the organization and international justice. A former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and of the Court of Appeal for Ontario, Arbour was chief prosecutor for the International Court of Justice during two international criminal tribunals: one for the former Yugoslavia, which resulted in Serbian president Slobodan Milošević being the first sitting head of state indicted for war crimes; and the tribunal for Rwanda in the world’s first conviction for genocide since 1948. Arbour also served as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and as the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for International Migration.

“She’s kind of a representative of the liberal internationalist spirit... She made a commitment to use the tools of the international system for humanitarian good. She is part of the generation that came of age during the 1990s that [had the idea of] protecting human rights, of using international law as a tool to police the international system....” says Gorman.

He goes on to explain how that type of thinking led to the formation of a UN Panel of Eminent Persons that developed the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine. It states that if there are crises “even if they are within the borders of a particular state, then the international community has both an obligation and authority to act, and the United Nations... to initiate intervention in a

state’s affairs,” adds Gorman, sharing that it has been used in countries including Chad and Libya.

In spite of Canada’s many contributions to the UN, it still does not have a seat on the Security Council.

The country will have to figure out how to further its international agenda, but according to Jesenský, that’s just part of the natural flow of history and international politics.

“The world is changing, and that’s normal. That’s how everything flows: countries are rising and declining... Today, we are talking about rising powers, great powers like India and China.... But Canada still has a lot to offer. It is, to some extent, an example of this globalized world due to the very colourful composition of its population and the links with practically all of the countries around the globe. So there are strings to pull and to use in this competitive arena. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn’t, but that’s how it is nowadays.”

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**CAROLYN GRUSKE** is an award-winning reporter and magazine editor. She often writes about the intersection of business, technology and the law, but she also has a deep interest in educational topics.



# Model UN and The Art of Diplomacy

In the first five years under communist rule in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, nearly 1.3 million people decided to abandon their homes and flee their native countries. An outflow of refugees on a scale the world had not witnessed since World War II, an exodus of Biblical proportions. What will the world do about it?

By Jessica Selzer

The Model UN Club found me in 2013 in the shape of two very keen grade 9 girls making a pitch to me at lunch about the need for more women in politics. I didn't quite understand what I was agreeing to, but they had me at "women in politics." I have been the staff sponsor ever since, and have loved to watch this club grow into the largest club in the school. It has been called "sports for smart kids," and is experiential collaborative learning at its finest.

The goal of the club is to prepare for conferences. At a Model UN Conference, students become "delegates" where they must roleplay as a specific country, in a specific UN Committee (General Assembly, World Health Organization, Disarmament and International Security Committee, United Nations Development Programme, etc.). There, they are presented with a real-world crisis that they must collaboratively solve in the form of "resolutions." To participate in just one conference, delegates must conduct research, collaborate, negotiate, lead, and speak publicly.

Model UN kids are passionate about attending these conferences and in recent years we have also run several simulations in my classroom during lunch time; the most popular being the Halloween-themed "zombie apocalypse." It inevitably gets a bit silly but is also great for recruiting students from the lower grades. We now order custom-made hoodies, and have a large wooden sign hung in the window of my door that was made by a senior student.

You would think that the long unpaid weekends away at conferences, making sure the kids are alive and well would be a burden to me. But I actually enjoy listening to them regale me with tales of competition, annoyance at the Dias (the moderators of the committees), and the drama of their committees. Seeing how proud they are of themselves not only when they win awards, but in what they accomplish during the conference is such a joy for a teacher. I loved when a new grade 8 student told me she sponsored a resolution, and even though she was nervous, stood with the team to present it.

Due to the passion that seems to be inherent in the MUN club, and the deep cooperative learning at conferences, I have wanted to incorporate MUN into my classroom for a while. I found my opportunity in the grade 10 social studies curriculum, when I expanded on the Vietnam War due to student interest, and stumbled upon one of the largest refugee crises in history.

My students' goal would be to act as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and solve the problem of the Southeast Asian refugee crisis of the 1970s and '80s. I would take all 3 MUN blocs (comprising a total of 120 students) to Asia Pacific Hall at the Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver for the entire day, with the hope that they would manage to write and pass a viable resolution.

I learned, however, the Model UN can mean more to students than I thought, and in a way that isn't gradable.



How can you put a numerical value on the moment when the usually very shy student comes to me during a break, *beaming* and asking if I saw her speak on the microphone, and if I was proud of what she said? Or when a student with an extensive Individual Education Plan (IEP) is given the opening statement of his delegation because his group wanted to make sure I “gave him a good mark,” and when he sat down he was high-fived by two group members on a job well done? Even the self-esteem that came from dressing up was a factor. The boys, in particular, wanted me to see their new suits—you could tell they were feeling pretty dapper—and a few of them told me that their fathers had taken them out shopping just for the occasion.

Students were graded on the quality of their country’s participation and their position paper. It was harder to grade the live performance than I thought because I kept getting distracted watching them debate each other. I loved hearing their passion, and watching them become so confident in their roles that they were able to throw barbs at each other across the room. “The delegation of China would like to remind the delegation of Thailand that it is hypocritical to lecture us on ethics when *they* have been pushing the refugees back into the ocean to be murdered by pirates!”

Initially, many of my students thought it would be easier to give the ethical answer that refugees should, of course, be helped. They learned, however, how challenging it actually is to follow through on that level of altruism.

They had to take into consideration geography, internal and external economics, the political spectrum, alliances, and history; not to mention their classmates’ personalities and the innate desire to “win.” During unmoderated caucuses, students found themselves shouting at each other about economic policy and historical alliances, and I got to overhear retorts such as, “I don’t care if it’s a good idea! I’m *not* sponsoring it! You nuked us, *twice!*” Each delegation wanted their sponsored resolution to be the one that got passed at the end of the day, even though it wasn’t worth extra marks.

They were so into it. I remember at the lunch break I ran into a large group of students at the same ramen restaurant the other teachers and I had chosen. There, they were holding a “secret meeting,” hoping that only *they* had thought of collaborating at this time. The main



feedback I received from my students was; even though we were at the Wosk Centre for five hours, they wished they had more time.

Their final resolutions were multi-faceted and included elements such as funding for the Orderly Departure Program, an Arranged Passage Initiative for expatriates, a program to train refugees in relevant economies so they can be better integrated into their host country, and a humanitarian effort to ensure refugee camps are safe and refugees are properly registered.

How did I pull this off? The entire unit had to be scaffolded around the Model UN conference. Besides the obvious historical content to set the stage, before the main event, students were individually required to turn in a position paper, to ensure that they had each done a minimal amount of research about the stance of their country before going into committee. I scheduled a few work block days for kids to get their heads around who might be good allies, and to create an online “resource binder” of everything they could possibly need in committee: legal documents, acts, articles, basic information on themselves and other countries, and ideas for resolutions.

We also practiced basic Model UN speaking decorum in class by announcing our favourite candies: “The delegation of x would like to state that our favourite candy is x, because...” and then attacking each other’s decisions. But nothing could really prepare the students for the moment they walked into the Wosk Centre early that morning. Or when they realized the microphone in front of them was on and they were expected to say something intelligent. One student, in awe at first seeing the expanse of the room, quipped, “Selzer, this is legit!”

So, why go to all this trouble? Kids might joke that “MUN is FUN!” but Model UN also fosters skills of leadership, problem solving, and cooperation. Many Model UN kids go on to university to study Political Science, and take up the mantle of activism. But no matter what field our students enter, in this era of globalization, they will have to interact with people from all over the world with diverse worldviews. Problems halfway around the world directly impact our lives and our communities. If our world needs anything right now, it is empathetic, creative, critical thinking young people who have learned how to influence and negotiate, and are passionate about making a difference.

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JESSICA SELZER has been a Social Studies teacher at Rockridge Secondary School in West Vancouver, BC since 2010, and staff sponsor of the Model UN club since 2013.





# Canada Speaks Softly But Persuasively: Notable Canadian Ambassadors

By Carolyn Cooper



Canada's diplomats and foreign service staff work on a vast range of assignments, in consulates, embassies, and High Commissions worldwide, and on permanent missions to forums like the United Nations (UN).

As one of the UN's founding members, Canada has always been an active participant in the multilateral organization, and according to Global Affairs Canada, we currently have "seven diplomatic missions accredited to the UN." The senior diplomat leading each of those missions is the ambassador, or permanent representative (PR), tasked with ensuring Canada's foreign policy goals are achieved.

The head of the UN mission is the PR to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, whose job it is to use "diplomacy, negotiation, and analysis of UN activities... to advance Canada's interests and strengthen the pillars of the UN: international development, peace and security, and human rights." Because of their high profile, Canada's ambassador to the UN is frequently seen as the face of Canadian diplomacy, who often brings his or her personal style and values to the role.

Following are four Canadian ambassadors who have influenced the way Canadian diplomacy plays out on the world stage.

## GEORGE IGNATIEFF

By the time George Ignatieff was appointed PR to the UN in 1966, he had already spent more than two decades in Canada's foreign service. During which, he helped establish Canada's reputation as a relationship builder between nations.

Ignatieff began his lengthy diplomatic career with the Department of External Affairs in 1939, working with Lester Pearson at the Canadian High Commission in London. After joining the Royal Artillery and working in intelligence, Ignatieff was named Canada's wartime delegate to the International Red Cross. Like Pearson, Ignatieff was horrified by the human and economic devastation of the Second World War and was committed to maintaining peace and world stability. He was convinced that a global, rules-based organization like the UN was essential for preserving peaceful mediation between nations. It was also in Canada's best interest as a middle power with a strong foreign service network.



Before being named UN ambassador, Ignatieff worked closely with Canada's first ambassador to the UN, General Andrew McNaughton, and served as ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1956 to 1958, and PR to NATO in 1963. "As an ambassador he was prototypically Canadian," says Adam Chapnick, Professor of Defence Studies at Royal Military College, and Deputy Director of Education at Canadian Forces College. "He was a relationship builder, he was well connected, very articulate, generally well liked and highly regarded."

During the Cold War era, says Chapnick, "smaller skirmishes at times would be the cost of doing business, but the real fear was that the great powers would go to war against one another, because that would be nuclear conflict. So peace was ideal, but stability and order were truly critical. As a result we could advance our interests best through a rules-based order where the best negotiators had success."

Chapnick adds, that "quite often the greatest accomplishments of small powers at the UN are things that don't get written up in any record book. Diplomacy can be very nuanced, and Ignatieff was extremely effective." He points to Ignatieff's work in arranging a series of "unofficial" hostage negotiations after the US spy ship *Pueblo* was captured by North Korea in 1968. "This is the kind of thing that Canada could do quite well—use the relationships we had to solve problems that other people couldn't solve."

Ignatieff worked with the UN until 1972, and was especially involved in disarmament efforts. He was named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1973, and was awarded the Pearson Medal of Peace by the UN Association in Canada in 1984.

## STEPHEN LEWIS

In 1984 Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney surprised some by naming Stephen Lewis, the former head of the Ontario New Democratic Party, as Canada's PR to the UN. Although far apart on the political spectrum, Lewis says the two found middle ground in their agreement on Canada's



international involvement, especially as the world experienced unprecedented humanitarian and health crises during the 1980s.

Mulroney made it clear from the beginning, says Lewis, that freeing Nelson Mandela and ending apartheid in South Africa were two of his highest priorities. "So success in that became one of the things which all of us who were involved felt most strongly about. Similarly the work on the Ethiopian famine." As a result, Lewis says he was allowed more autonomy in how he achieved foreign policy goals. "It was a special privilege, which was quite unusual. The ambassador is, in significant measure, dependant on the foreign service in Ottawa and the Prime Minister's office. Mulroney allowed me to say and do things which were much more flexible and interventionist than is usual with ambassadors."

Lewis remembers the UN as "a pleasure to be part of. It was so fascinating to sit down with the ambassador of Singapore one day and the ambassador of Egypt the next, and discuss subjects which were coming before the General Assembly or the Security Council. And it was a real privilege to deal in so many different cultures and values." Canada's high diplomatic profile during the 1980s also opened doors. "We were considered to be principled and progressive, reliable and accessible," says Lewis. "We had an excellent reputation based on peacekeeping, our official development assistance, and our multilateral reputation."

Lewis served as PR until 1988, and went on to work as deputy executive director of UNICEF in 1995, and [UN special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa](#) in 2001. "It was those experiences that made me understand you could really make progress internationally if you mobilized the right people and if you used the podium," he says. "You could really move things through multilateralism."

Following his work with the UN, Lewis co-founded the international advocacy group AIDS-Free World, and the Stephen Lewis Foundation that assists people affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa. He was named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 2002, and was awarded the Pearson Medal of Peace in 2004.

Lewis believes Canada's standing at the UN has diminished in recent years as "we began to be far more rhetorical than we were substantive." At the same time, he says some areas of the UN require reform. "The UN at the moment is in a very precarious state, induced by

the fact that the Security Council doesn't function, because the permanent five members use the veto indiscriminately to serve their own interests. However, the other side of the UN—the funds and programs and specialized agencies like UNICEF and the World Food Programme—often works in exemplary fashion. They do a superlative job on the ground. It's this enormous amount of work that the UN performs to keep the world going that is truly the measure of multilateralism.”

## LOUISE FRÉCHETTE

A career diplomat, Louise Fréchette worked in embassies and on missions around the world including, Greece, Switzerland, and Argentina before being named Canada's PR to the UN in 1992.

Fréchette's interest in international diplomacy began while at university in Montreal and Belgium. “It was just a curiosity about the world. But along the way I discovered, particularly with true multilateral diplomacy, that you were dealing with major issues that have global consequences, and complex problems may involve dealing with people from all kinds of backgrounds and origins. I find all of that extremely stimulating.”

At the time, recalls Fréchette, the UN was a very collegial place, and Canada's reputation made it easy to make connections. “My approach to being effective in a multilateral setting is to forge links with your counterparts, and try to get to know them personally, to be a friendly interlocutor,” she laughs. “I would say it is quite representative of a Canadian way of acting in a multilateral context, because we're not a big power, we don't win by bullying or playing the lone wolf.”

Despite the conflicts in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Fréchette says diplomatic co-operation between nations was high during the 1990s. “There were interesting and stimulating circumstances, with the end of the Cold War, and the developing world evolving. And our policy at the time was very much designed to strengthen the UN, and Canada wanted to be seen to be fully engaged.”

Fréchette was very much an active ambassador. “On peacekeeping there were a lot of policy reforms, as well as a large number of operations going on,” she recalls. “And I shared a crew that shepherded all kinds of reforms to improve the UN delivery of humanitarian assistance. I was particularly



## LESTER B. PEARSON



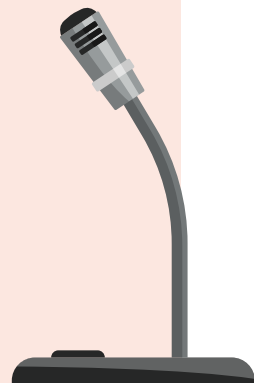
Lester B. Pearson, Canada's 14th Prime Minister, was a public servant and diplomat before entering politics. During his time as Canadian ambassador to

the US in 1945, Pearson was involved in establishing both the UN and NATO. He believed deeply in the importance of maintaining peace and world stability.

Although Pearson never officially served as Canada's UN ambassador, he worked closely with the organization throughout his career. In 1956, while he was Canada's secretary of state of External Affairs, Pearson proposed the first UN Nations Emergency Force, a multi-nation peacekeeping army, as a solution to the rapidly escalating conflict between Egypt, Israel, Britain, and France over the Suez Canal. The UN force managed to maintain the ceasefire while the combatants withdrew, and remained in Egypt until 1967. Pearson won the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for establishing the peacekeeping tradition that continues today.



CANADA



involved with the US representative, Madeleine Albright, in finding a way forward for the deployment of the UN mission in Haiti. So there was a lot going on.”

After serving as Canada’s deputy minister of National Defence from 1995 to 1998, Fréchette returned to the UN in 1998 as its first deputy secretary-general, a position created by secretary-general Kofi Annan as part of reforms to the organization. She remained in the role until 2006, and has since continued to work with global charities such as CARE, and international think tanks like the Global Leadership Foundation.

Since the early 2000s, Fréchette says geopolitical realities, including the rising power of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), have significantly changed UN dynamics. “What we see nowadays are the big conflicts and confrontations involving China, Russia, and the US, and the Security Council, where much of that rivalry is played out. That’s what makes the headlines, and therefore one gets the impression that the UN is totally paralyzed. But it isn’t quite true. The UN is involved in every field of human activity and operates at many different levels.”

Fréchette also firmly believes the UN’s value as a multilateral institution far outweighs its problems. “The alternative is rules made by the strongest, and this is not in the interests of the vast majority of countries,” she says. “There are a lot of problems that are global in character and require global co-operation, and you need a place where everybody can come together. It doesn’t mean that the UN cannot and doesn’t need to be reformed, but to me it’s not the perennity of the institution, but the perennity of the concept of multilateral co-operation.”

## BOB RAE

In July 2020, former Ontario premier Bob Rae was appointed PR to the UN. Rae has spent four decades in provincial and federal politics, including as interim leader of the federal Liberal Party, and is a Companion of the Order of Canada, and a member of the Order of Ontario. Since leaving politics in 2013, Rae has served as Canada’s special envoy to Myanmar to investigate the



Rohingya human rights crisis, and as special envoy on Humanitarian and Refugee Issues.

During a Global Affairs press conference announcing his appointment, Rae noted that his father had worked in the Canadian foreign service for 40 years, and as ambassador to the UN in New York and Geneva. “So to be able to work in the same place as my father, and to be engaging constantly in a sense that we’re part of a very fine tradition, is a wonderful moment for me.”

He also outlined that one aim of his tenure would be to re-connect Canadians with our legacy of international diplomacy. “Many Canadians say to me, ‘Why don’t we spend all of our time focusing on Canada, as opposed to helping others?’” says Rae. “But we have to understand that to protect Canadian security and prosperity, we have to engage globally. And in particular we have to engage at a time when things are so difficult in terms of health, in terms of the condition of people, and the financial stability and political security of the world. That’s going to be my job number one—to convince Canadians of the importance of what we’re trying to do—and also to persuade as many other countries as we can that we need to work together to reinforce, to renew, to rebuild a successful world order.”



Whether helping to negotiate peace treaties between nations, or organizing the delivery of food and medical aid to refugees, the UN ambassador is viewed as Canada’s global mediator. How they establish and cultivate multilateral relationships with their UN peers has a huge impact on Canada’s standing in the world, as well as on our ability to achieve foreign policy. Ultimately, they are an essential, if sometimes unseen, diplomatic link between nations. “Canadian ambassadors have traditionally been very involved on a day-to-day basis with their colleagues from other countries in seeking to improve the functioning of the UN,” says Fréchette, “and to ensure that whatever decisions are negotiated contribute to the global welfare, and not only to the achievements of specific Canadian objectives.”

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CAROLYN COOPER is a freelance writer and editor living in Kawartha Lakes, Ontario.

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# A Lesson on Empathy: Refugees and the UN Rights of a Child

By Michelle Watrin

“All right Rubin, can you read from the UNICEF website under the Rights of a Child?” It was September of 2015 and the new school year was off to its usual start as I began teaching my class about global poverty and inequality issues through the UN Rights of a Child.

The school where I was teaching at the time was located in the inner city of Abbotsford, BC. My students represented a variety of cultures and worldviews. My first impressions were of a lively, fun group, but I could tell there would be a few classroom management challenges. We were known as Pod J because the school follows the practice of “looping,” which meant I was their teacher for two consecutive years—grade six and then, grade seven. Little did I know, that what started as a simple lesson plan would become a two-year journey and one of the most incredible teaching experiences of my career.

Rubin, a bubbly student who always smiled, began reading. “Every child has the right to health, education and protection, and every society has a stake in expanding children’s opportunities in life. Yet, around the world,

millions of children are denied a fair chance for no reason other than the country, gender or circumstances into which they are born.”

A discussion ensued about different reasons students around the world could not go to school. “Last year we learned about girls in Ethiopia who have to walk for water instead of going to school when my elementary school did a Run for Water,” Taryn shared.

“Lucky!” Rubin called out, which produced some giggles. I smiled with them and asked, “Is that lucky? Think about how your life would be different if our country was not as fortunate as others. We’ve won the lottery in life, Pod J. We were born in Canada, a peaceful, prosperous, compassionate country where we don’t have to worry about clean water or other things, like war.”

“Yeah, I heard we have the best tasting water in the world!” Emily said. It was true, our water had won a global taste test and it had been on the news.

“Yes, so think about how easy it is to turn on a tap in the morning for water to drink, brush your teeth, and cook your oatmeal. Now, think about a life where you have

to walk miles and miles to collect water. Or, a life where you have to maneuver through a war zone to try to get to school. That is what kids your age are doing today in Syria.”

Over the next few weeks, we used the UN Rights of a Child as a springboard into the Canadian Federal Election that year by discussing the different governmental systems of countries around the world. The students showed a real interest in the election, especially in Justin Trudeau, who, his political opponents playfully insisted was “just not ready, but nice hair though.” The kids laughed at these commercials and were amazed that “old, political people” actually had a sense of humour.

During this time, the world, and my students, were shocked by the images of a drowned Syrian boy washed up to on a beach while attempting to escape to Greece. As a result, Mr. Trudeau made a campaign promise to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by Christmas, which was only two months away.

After some research and soul-searching discussions, each student was given a sticky note to write their strongest feeling on the refugees coming and stick it, either, in the PRO or CON column on our bulletin board. At the end of the survey, the results were 50-50.

While I was pleased to read notes that followed the theme of “It’s the Canadian way to help others,” I was disheartened by others. “They may bring in new viruses,” or as Rubin wrote, “Mr. Trudeau is worried about keeping his promise to bring 25,000 by Christmas but he can’t possibly check out each one close enough.” Clearly, my students had seen and absorbed recent news coverage of the Ebola outbreaks in Africa and a string of terrorist attacks in Europe. Their feelings were raw and real. I appreciated their honesty, but wondered if I could help them develop compassion and empathy towards these refugees.

We continued to follow the news and watched Syrian refugees begin to arrive in Canada, and kept track of Trudeau’s promise. Playing off the students’ interests, I weaved learning outcomes through a makeshift unit on what it would be like to live in a refugee camp. UNICEF videos became our textbooks as we watched dirt and dust fly around young kids jumping rope and playing with nothing more than rocks and buckets, day after day, as they waited for their country to be peaceful again. The refugees explained through UNICEF translators that they lived in tents, waited for the daily water truck, ate meat only once a week, and shared access to a makeshift kitchen with

many other families. Some camps had a space for school, others didn’t. My students were seeing firsthand how some children were being denied their rights.

At the end of the year, I wanted my students to take a walk in a refugee’s shoes. I assigned a writing exercise that asked them to pretend they were living in a refugee camp and to include their thoughts on receiving news they were chosen to come to Canada. The writing assignments were good, but I wasn’t sure if any students with reservations had changed their perspectives. At least, I thought, they were given the opportunity to understand the situation more.

It was now the first day of school in the fall of 2016 and I was once again teaching the same students with the usual sprinkling of new kids. Two of them, a boy and a girl, were clearly from another country, with clues pointing to somewhere in the Middle East—his dark features and her hijab. I noticed the girl had a jagged front tooth and could not move her right arm very well. The boy wore a Twilight t-shirt and jeans.

Upon greeting them, I quickly assessed English was not their first language or a language they knew very well. He knew more than she did, however, and translated a bit. With curious, contemplating eyes they sat amongst the rest of the students, went through the first day activities with as much success as possible (lots of gestures by myself and other students), and left at the bell. My head was spinning.

During our staff meeting that afternoon, my colleagues and I learned our school had six new students who were Syrian refugees. The district had several new Syrian families and decided to assign them to different schools so as to not overload a given school’s ELL program. We were told not to ask the Syrian students anything about their past as they may be full of trauma. “Treat these kids with compassion, just make them feel safe and a part of class for now,” we were instructed. Their native language was Arabic, and the district had hired a translator to help us if we needed to talk with their families.

We’d never had a level one ELL student in our school, let alone six. Myself, our ELL support teacher, and other colleagues



tried our very best to assist these students. But quite honestly, there were times I could not help them while maneuvering my lessons to meet the needs of the other students in the class.

Over the next few months, however, I was inspired to witness most of my students go out of their way to help and befriend these two kids. Girls helped the female Syrian student, Kalilah, with English flashcards, and boys admired Mirhan, the male Syrian student's soccer abilities.

Three months into the school year, a woman from our district ELL program came to meet with teachers who had Syrian refugee students in their classes. We learned they had all been living in a hotel while waiting for more permanent homes. And for the first time, I learned many of the families longed to return to Syria. I naively believed they would want to live in Canada—a country of freedom and peace—forever. But the puzzle pieces started to fit; they wanted the homes and the family members they had left behind. How hard it must be to come and learn a new language while trying to find a route to employment to support their families.

Many mornings, I reflected as I watched my students stand for our national anthem. Mirhan, who was a bit smaller than most seventh graders, stood at attention and stared respectfully at the flag. I could only imagine how, behind his eager eyes, this daily school tradition must feel bittersweet: a feeling of relief to live in peace, but also an anxiety about his family's future. He has five brothers and sisters and both parents had trouble finding jobs after being in Canada almost a year. Mirhan's skills developed really well, and we all celebrated when he gave a Google slide presentation in front of the class on the Mesopotamian invention of the chariot. He was eager to try to learn what the other kids were learning. His progress was so encouraging, and I was confident he would eventually catch up to his peers. He was even considered for the leadership group "Where Everyone Belongs" (WEB) as a future grade nine mentor.

Kalilah had received some dental and medical treatments, and she smiled a lot some days. Other days were clearly uncomfortable for her. We found out she had

lived most of her life in a refugee camp prior to coming to Canada and hadn't been able to attend school. Our ELL teacher learned she did not know her native language's alphabet. Not surprisingly, she struggled to learn English. She also shared with some of her female peers that her sister had died in a bombing. Emotions were once again very raw and real. However, she laboured through every day in my class, touching my heart in the last term when she created a Google slide that had the simplest yet most meaningful note, "Thank you teacher."

In the last weeks of our seventh grade year together, I got the opportunity to talk with Rubin during a nature walk for our daily physical activity. I asked him about his two Syrian classmates, and reminded him of his past apprehension in bringing refugees to Canada.

He giggled and said, "They're great. They remind me Canada is a place of peace. I'm glad they're safe here. And Mirhan is such a good shooter in soccer!" Without a quiz or test, Rubin and my other students exceeded my expectations on learning the importance of the Rights of a Child. They naturally connected the experiences of their Syrian classmates to the lessons on the UN. And their perspectives were changing as their empathy grew. What started as a typical social studies lesson grew into so much more.

\*Student names have been changed.

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MICHELLE WATRIN has been a teacher in the Abbotsford School District for over 20 years. An avid lover of the outdoors, she, her husband, and four kids enjoy spending their time camping, kayaking, hiking, and biking. She is currently teaching online in the transitions program at Clayburn Middle School.





# WHO IS WHO? Examining the Role of the World Health Organization

By Alex Newman

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, it is affecting every aspect of life, from jobs to health to education. For teachers, the challenge began last March when schools closed down, forcing them to scramble to provide online learning.

For Toronto high school art and tech teacher Renee Bucholtz, not being at school was difficult. Not only did she find it hard to adapt art to online instruction, but she “really missed the interaction with the students.”

A new challenge presented itself this summer when provincial education ministries announced classes would resume in person in September. While Bucholtz was happy about going back to class to see the students, at 61 with a few underlying health issues, she’s at risk. “It’s a hard one—I feel safer working at home but happier working at school.”

The Ontario Ministry of Education offered teachers a choice: return to class or continue at home. To help make the decision Bucholtz turned to fellow teachers, Canada’s top public health officials, articles from respected publications, and various social media feeds.

“I was on Facebook checking in with my various teacher’s groups from all over North America and Europe,”

she says. “There was a lot of discussion worldwide about how they’d either done or were going to do reopening.” But she also spent time on the World Health Organization (WHO) website since almost everything she read and heard referenced the organization.

One of the WHO’s leading epidemiologists, Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, says “there’s a lot of considerations that need to be taken into account when deciding whether and how to open schools. It’s not just a matter of if they should open, it’s how they should open. And there’s a lot of detrimental effects to children who are not in school.”

Three years in the making, the WHO was formed in April 1948 as part of the United Nations, and during a period of idealistic globalism that came after the Second World War. It promotes health worldwide, with the goal to ensure a billion more people have universal health coverage. One of its beliefs is that “health is a human right and all people should enjoy the highest standard of health. This aspiration towards better health for everyone, everywhere has guided the organization’s work ever since.”

That same year, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was also established and it stated that health was a

fundamental human right. Relatedly, the WHO moved to recognize human health as “fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and dependent on the fullest cooperation of individuals and states.” The organization believed good physical and mental health would lead to increased social stability and reduced incidences of war—in other words, peace. These foci make the WHO’s role especially important and relevant in today’s global health situation, where COVID-19 appears to disproportionately affect the poorest and most unstable regions.

The organization culls its information from a variety of resources such as global decision makers, and government agencies and ministries. As well, other stakeholders that engage with the WHO include, “foundations, intragovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, civil society, media, professional associations, and WHO collaborating centres.”

For example, there are over 800 WHO collaborating centres across the world, where the WHO partners with organizations like the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Canada, which has a special interest in social determinants of health, has worked closely with the WHO on tuberculosis and polio eradication, as well as maternal health initiatives. And beginning in 1956, the CDC’s Influenza Division has served as a collaborating centre and “is the largest global resource and reference center supporting public health interventions to control and prevent pandemic and seasonal influenza.”

Since the WHO officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020, leading to a global response, researchers and scientists have been working feverishly

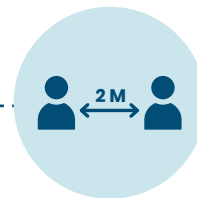
to find a vaccine. The virus is so new, however, that it’s taking time, and some of the research changes.

That’s certainly influencing teachers, like Renee Bucholtz, who says there’s more information she’d like to have. Like, how well teenaged students will comply with mask mandates, how older schools can ensure better ventilation, and what the infection risks and transmission rates are in children.

Currently, the WHO is working with individual countries to study COVID-19 transmission in schools. What they’ve found as of this writing is that kids up to the age of 18 represent 8.5% of reported infections, even though that age group represents around 30% of the global population. The larger sphere of contacts that most children have—school and community—is something that needs further study to better assess the risk of infection and transmission. The WHO recommends precautions to minimize risks, especially for those with underlying conditions such as chronic respiratory illness, obesity, diabetes or cancer. Kids’ incubation periods are the same, with symptoms usually appearing about 5-6 days after exposure, but ranging from 1-14 days.

The WHO admits transmission in kids isn’t well understood, mostly because kids tend to have milder and fewer symptoms. Early data suggests that teenagers’ infection rates are higher than younger children and some studies suggest that school reopening might have a small effect on greater community transmission.

The bottom line is that schools must communicate closely with public health agencies. And they need to enforce physical distancing, limit mixed age groups, stay-home when unwell policies, and consider staggered recess and lunch breaks, as well as screening options



on arrival. Students and parents must be kept informed about safety measures, including immunization checks. And essential services such as school meals and mental health supports should continue.

While the WHO recommends use of masks, those are mandated at a local or national level. There is plenty of advice on the website, though, about proper use, how to sew, and the safety difference between fabric and medical masks.

Another factor in reducing transmission is proper ventilation. The WHO recommends that, in addition to consulting HVAC professionals, open windows if possible, increase the percentage of outdoor air to as much as 100%, and increase total airflow to classrooms. As well, increase ventilation rates through natural or mechanical means, preferably without recirculating the air. And if air is recirculated, filters should be cleaned regularly.

Many questions have arisen about antibodies, whether a person is immune after having COVID-19, and for how long, and how soon an effective vaccine is coming. In an early briefing, WHO officials stressed that early studies point to lower-than-expected antibody levels against the disease within the general population, meaning that most people remain susceptible.

In the race to find an effective vaccine, the WHO strongly urges global cooperation, and has spoken out against “vaccine nationalism,” urging leaders to share what they know and develop.

If the world shares its knowledge and tools, says WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the world will recover faster together and “economic recovery can be faster and the damage from COVID-19 can be lessened.”

On global health issues, the WHO, arguably, has the last word. However, in recent months the organization has been attacked and its advice ignored by some countries.

Dr. Clare Wenham, a Professor of Global Health Policy at the London School of Economics, said in a *Guardian* article in April 2020, that as the virus continues its unrelenting surge through the world, the WHO has become less important. That’s because “No one is thinking about reducing the global numbers, only their own. The WHO is a global force, but people aren’t thinking globally.”

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ALEX NEWMAN is a Toronto freelance writer and editor. Visit her website, [alexnewmanwriter.com](http://alexnewmanwriter.com).



Since its inception, the WHO has been responsible for unprecedented global initiatives in public health:

- 1948:** The International Classification of Diseases
- 1950:** A protocol for responsible use of antibiotics
- 1952-1957:** Facilitated global campaigns for polio vaccines that led to its near eradication
- 1969:** Worked with member states to control cholera, plague, yellow fever, smallpox, relapsing fever and typhus
- 1974:** Brought vaccines to children worldwide
- 1979:** Declared smallpox eliminated thanks to its ambitious 12-year global vaccination campaign
- 1995:** Responsible for reducing TB, and saving over 37 million lives (as of 2013)
- 2002:** Europe declared polio-free
- 2006:** The number of children dying under 5 drastically reduced
- 2009:** Collaborated on influenza vaccines to fight the new H1N1 virus
- 2010:** Involved in a move towards universal health coverage
- 2014:** Deployed thousands of technical experts, equipment and support staff to stop Ebola in West Africa

# Making Rights Real: Teaching the UNCRC

By Nikita Griffioen

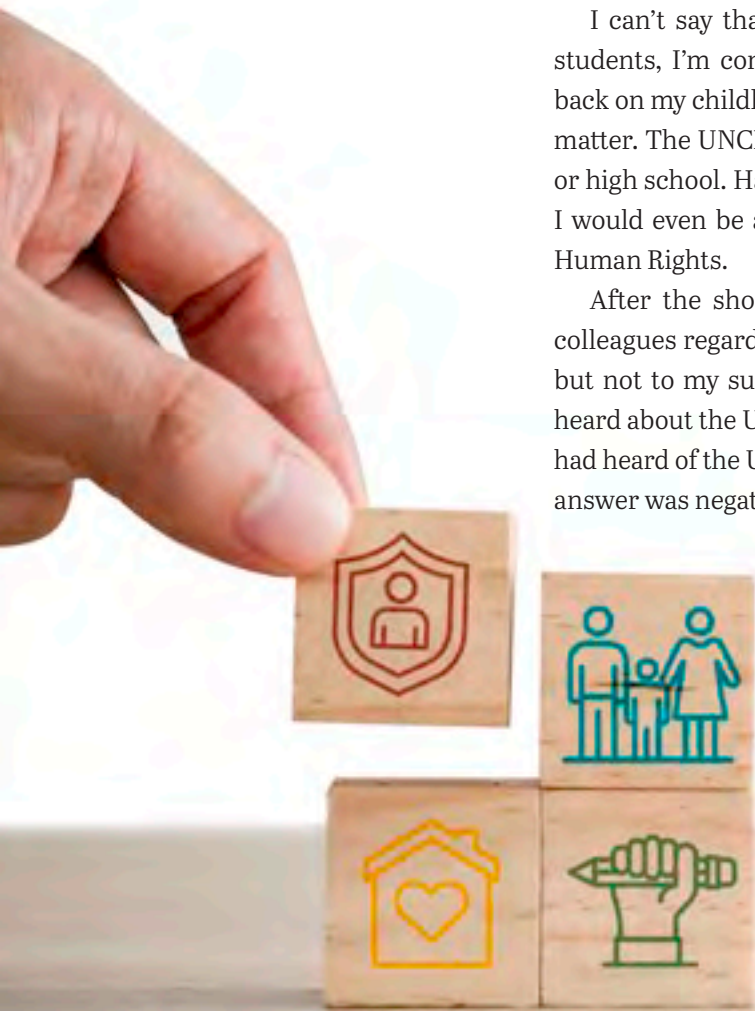
“What do you mean, we have rights as minors?” Thirty pairs of quizzical eyes met mine. Brows furrowed in confusion. “Aren’t rights made by adults, for adults?” I heard a student mutter. Even the most distracted of students gave me their full attention, convinced I was teaching about some mythical topic.

This was the response I received as I introduced my grade 9 social studies class to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). I made the decision on a whim to dedicate one lesson to the UNCRC, thinking (wrongly) that it would be quick to cover before moving on to further topics. It wasn’t long before I realized that I needed to spend much more time on this.

I can’t say that their reactions were surprising. Had I been one of those students, I’m confident that my reply would have been the same. Thinking back on my childhood, I too wasn’t told my rights at an age when it would most matter. The UNCRC was never part of the curriculum I learned in elementary or high school. Had I not taken a Social Justice class in university, I doubt that I would even be aware of a children’s version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

After the shocked response from my students, I talked to some of my colleagues regarding their experience with the UNCRC. Much to my chagrin, but not to my surprise, the overwhelming majority of my peers had neither heard about the UNCRC nor taught it. Similarly, I asked my other classes if they had heard of the UNCRC, whether in school or out in the world? Once again, the answer was negative.

The UNCRC is a treaty among countries designed to protect the rights of children. It was drafted in 1989 and ratified by Canada in 1991. By extension, UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) is an organization and charity that advocates these rights through humanitarian work. According to UNICEF’s website, the UNCRC embodies the most complete statement of children’s rights ever produced



and is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history. On its website, UNICEF also explains that all the rights are connected; they are all equally important, and they cannot be taken away from children.

There are a total of 54 articles listed under the UNCRC. Here are the first three:

- 1 A child is anyone under 18;
- 2 There should be no discrimination regarding implementation of these rights;
- 3 Best interests of the child should be of primary concern.

These are sensible and straightforward articles with which any reasonable person may agree. It is the fourth article where I must stop and reflect: “Governments must do all they can to make sure that every child in their countries can enjoy all the rights in this Convention.” In other words: “Making rights real.”

It is here, at just the fourth article that we are already failing our students, and thus the generations to come. How are we making rights real? How should students know their rights can be upheld, by law if necessary, if they have no knowledge of them in the first place?

Drawing from The Children’s Version of the UNCRC, children have rights as follows: the right to an identity (article 8); to contact with parents across countries (article 10); to respect for children’s views (article 12); access to education (article 28); protection from harmful work (article 32); and that the best law for children applies (article 41). This represents only six articles out of the entire document and they seem like basic things we take for granted, but they alone illustrate how many rights to which children are entitled. I know that my students couldn’t possibly imagine living without just these six rights so it’s important for them and all minors to be aware of all their rights.

Working at what is considered to be an inner-city school, I encounter students who often have their rights infringed upon (though I doubt this infringement is exclusive to inner-city institutions). Whether it’s an adult in their life not respecting their privacy (article 16), or a student feeling as though they can’t share their thoughts freely (article 13), minors are constantly dealing with individuals pushing boundaries. And most of the time,



these children aren’t aware that they can do something about it. They don’t know that how they are being treated is lawfully unfair. This issue becomes even more pertinent when considering rights such as “protection from violence” (article 19) and “protection from sexual abuse” (article 34). Children who find themselves in these terrible situations are often prey to adults who disregard those rights and instead, convince the child that it is they, not the adult, who is in the wrong. A child who doesn’t know his or her rights won’t have the means for defending themselves against adults who are in positions of authority.

Consider this a call to action, then. The forty-second article of the UNCRC states that “everyone must know children’s rights.” For everyone to know these rights, they must be taught, and preferably from a young age. Knowledge of the UNCRC will serve to help young people advocate for themselves—and each other—when adults in their life may fail to do so.

The one lesson I had planned for my social studies class turned into two full days of learning. My other lesson plans were pushed back as, instead, we dissected the UNCRC articles, discussed each one in turn, and talked about what it meant in their lives and those of young people around the world. Rarely had I seen such engagement regarding content, but then again, it’s not often that students encounter new material that targets their wellbeing. We also talked about what to do if just

one of these rights was violated. Who could they talk to? What could they say? Students thought of adults they trusted and devised language that included referencing the UNCRC to make their voices heard.

Teaching the UNCRC did not halt at just my social studies class. When I realized that most students were not aware of their rights, I incorporated learning about some of the articles into my other classes as well. In English, students were assigned an article and wrote a short story incorporating it. While in art class, students created posters raising awareness of these rights along with illustrations specific to different articles.

Each time the UNCRC was introduced to students, it was met first with incredulousness. Rights—until then—had seemed something “adultish” and far-fetched. Once students realized that they held the power to maintain and advocate for their own rights, there was a transformation in attitude. Students began to approach social justice issues from a rights-centred perspective, talking about topics like foster care and school lunch programs in terms of the rights they upheld. They embraced the power and now had the ability to advocate for themselves and others.

I feel there is no excuse for any teacher not being aware of the UNCRC. Including it in today’s curriculum will empower minors to advocate should they find themselves in a situation with nowhere to turn. In an ideal world, adults would always uphold these rights as gold standards. Unfortunately, adults can’t always be trusted



to do so. Since we don’t live in an ideal world, it is our job as educators to inform young people of their rights, the importance of those rights, and how to make sure they’re upheld, as the law states. I would never want any minors to feel compelled to advocate for themselves. Having that ability, however, is vital.

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NIKITA GRIFFIOEN currently teaches in Abbotsford, British Columbia. When she’s not in class, you can find her traveling, snowboarding, surfing, reading, or making art.



# UNHCR: The Nation Building Narrative

By Meagan Gillmore

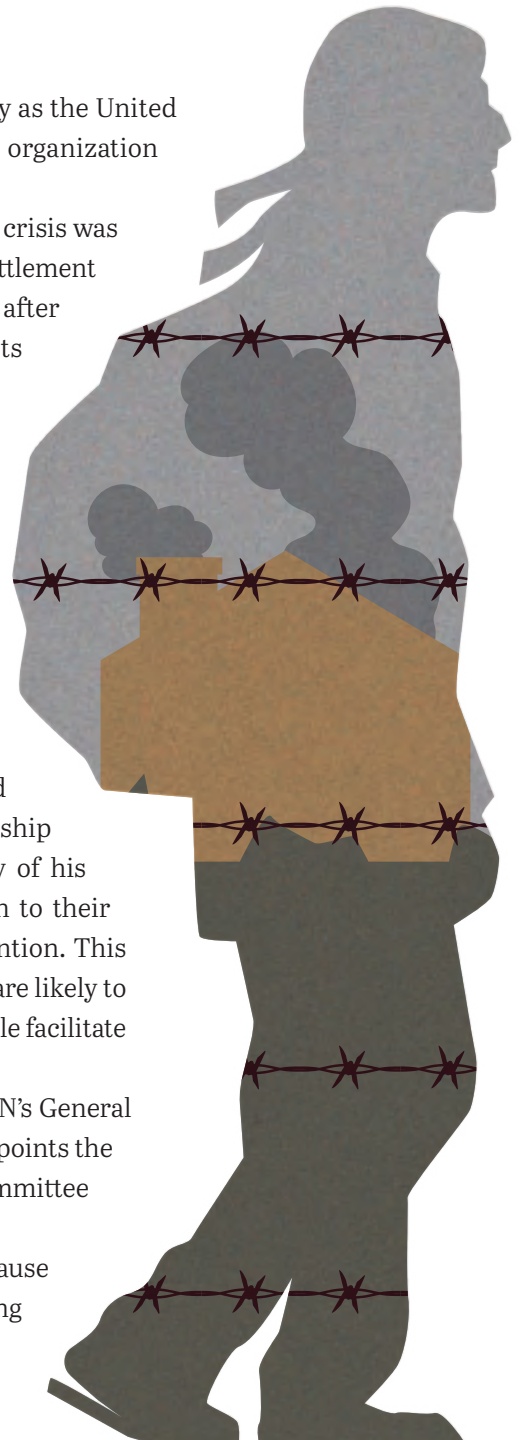
Few institutions have been as instrumental in shaping Canada today as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Yet when the organization began in 1950, its mandate was for only a few years.

“There was this idea at the very beginning that, somehow, this refugee crisis was going to sort itself out,” explains Michael Casasola, the UNHCR’s senior resettlement officer in Canada. Its early focus was helping people who became refugees after the Second World War. Now, the inter-governmental organization assists people around the world who have been forced to flee their homes: including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, stateless people, and returnees. “We’ve not been able to sort out the refugee problem,” says Casasola. “The trend has been the other way.... It just gets increasingly complex year by year.”

By the end of 2019, there were 79.5 million displaced people worldwide, according to the UNHCR. This accounts for 1% of the global population. Of that, 26 million were refugees: 20.4 million of those were people who fit the definition of “refugee” to fall within the UNHCR’s mandate. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as someone who, because of a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality.” Because of that fear, they are unwilling or unable to return to their country of origin. The concept of “non-refoulement” is key in the Convention. This says that refugees should not be returned to their country of origin if they are likely to be harmed. The Convention also says that countries should “as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees.”

The UNHCR works in more than 130 countries. It is governed by the UN’s General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The General Assembly appoints the UNHCR’s High Commissioner, who serves for five years. The Executive Committee approves the budget. Canada has participated in this committee since 1958.

The UNHCR can be mistaken for a non-governmental organization because staff in some countries provide direct services to individuals, such as housing or education, explains Casasola.



## A LONG PARTNERSHIP

Immigration is key in Canada's history. "We have a nation-building narrative that is inviting of immigration generally, and that is also applied to refugees," says Jennifer Hyndman a professor in the faculty of environmental and urban change at York University in Toronto and resident scholar at the school's Centre for Refugee Studies. "Many, if not most, people can trace their roots back to some other place, so Canada's image historically has been around nation-building." Immigration is necessary for Canada's economy, and Canada's geography makes it a suitable place for refugee settlement.

"The countries who [resettle refugees] tend to be the ones who can control their borders otherwise," says Hyndman. "We're surrounded by a very large deterrent of icy water," she continues. It's dangerous for people to cross the Atlantic Ocean in boats. "Canada prefers to choose refugees for resettlement from abroad, however, not all refugees arrive in that manner," she says. In recent years, thousands of people have entered Canada at informal entry points along the US border to make refugee claims. "While such unauthorized entry may be unlawful in administrative law, it is not criminal, and does not prejudice a refugee claim in Canada," says Hyndman.

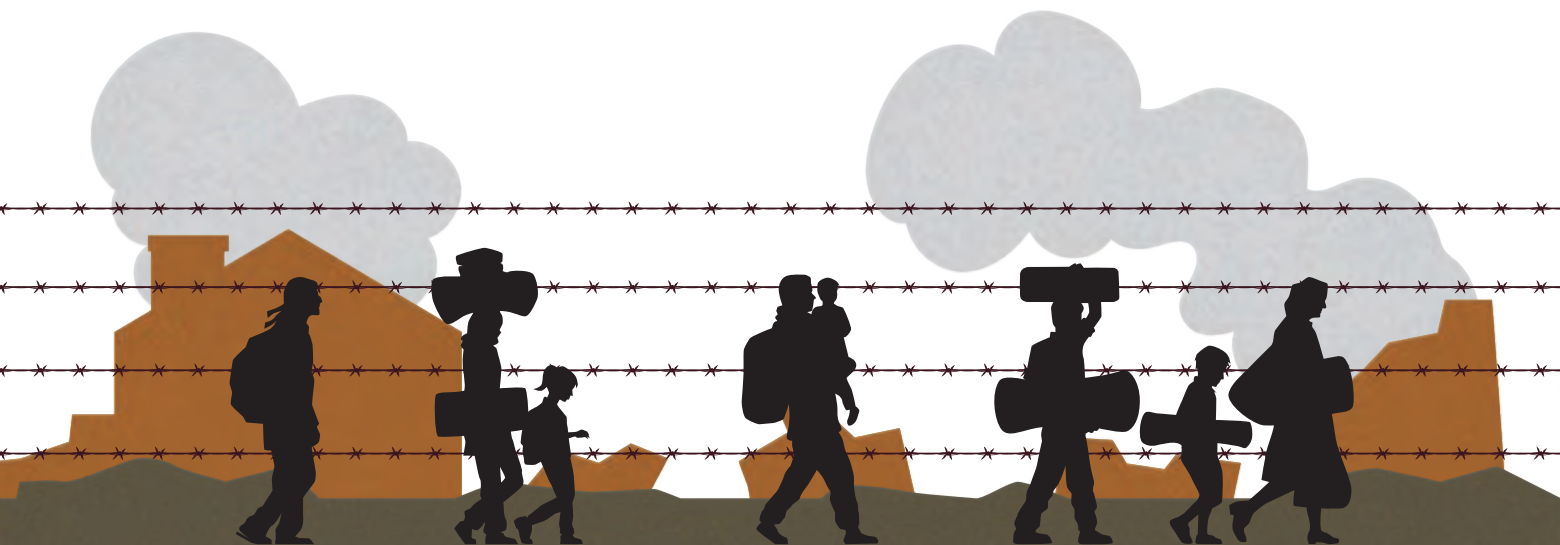
But Canada hasn't always been willing to resettle refugees. Before the Second World War, Canada's response to refugees was blemished. While Canada has financially supported the UNHCR since it began and played a leadership role in drafting the 1951 Convention—a document Mike Molloy, who oversaw the creation of

Canada's private sponsorship program in the 1970s, calls "a major miracle" given that Russia and the United States both were involved—Canada did not ratify the convention, or its 1967 Protocol until 1969.

In the decades after the Second World War, many of the refugees who came to Canada were fleeing communist countries in Europe. "Each one of those was kind of a one-off, because there was really no policy framework for responding to large refugee situations," says Molloy, who started in Canada's foreign service in 1968, processing visas for Czech refugees. In 1972, he helped bring thousands of Ugandan Asian refugees to Canada, after Idi Amin expelled them from the country. In six weeks, Molloy and his team moved 6,000 refugees to Canada. In the pages of their visa applications, he read telegrams that would become the basis of Canada's private refugee sponsorship program.

## PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP BEGINS

The job in Uganda was "arduous," Molloy says, remembering how each member of the team had to process at least 25 cases a day. Sometimes, however, as he was going through applications, he would find a telegram written by a Canadian, saying they were related to the refugee, and asking for the refugee to be sent to their home in Canada. When Molloy read those messages, his reaction was: "I'm not going to worry about this case. I'm going to whip it through pretty quickly because I know there's somebody who cares. We got so many of these things that we had to set up a special system to track them."





He told those creating the private sponsorship program to “design it in such a way that when the visa officer opens the file and sees that sponsorship, he knows he can take that to the bank. That it’s solid and there’s a group of good people out there who really want to help.”

The Immigration Act of 1976 created the private sponsorship program, at the time the only one in the world. It launched in April 1978. Private Canadians agreed to support refugees financially and socially for one year. This included meeting refugees at the airport, securing housing for them, and helping them obtain the necessary paperwork, like health cards and driver’s licences. According to the federal government, by April 2019, more than 327,000 refugees had come to Canada through private sponsorship. “This was to make sure that it was a real undertaking, and the idea was that if Canadian people want to do it, we were going to facilitate this as much as possible,” Molloy says.

Private sponsorship had existed, on a smaller scale, before then. Jewish groups paid for Jewish refugees to come to Canada after the Second World War. The Mennonite Central Committee, other Christian denominations, and ethno-cultural groups also privately sponsored refugees. But this program made the practice more widespread. It proved incredibly timely. Between 1979 and 1980, more than 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees were resettled in Canada after the Vietnam War. Slightly more than half of them were privately sponsored. By 1997, Canada had welcomed approximately 140,000 Southeast Asian refugees. In 1986, the UNHCR awarded its Nansen Refugee Medal, which recognizes individuals, groups and organizations for outstanding protection of refugees,

displaced people and stateless people, to the people of Canada, the only time the award has been given to the people of an entire nation.

## ENDURING LEGACY

Canada has become known as a world leader in refugee resettlement; in 2018 and 2019, Canada resettled more refugees than any other nation. “Whenever we have a refugee crisis, one of the questions that Canada immediately asks is, ‘Is there going to be a resettlement component?’” says Casasola. Other countries often ask Canada about how to establish similar programs. In 2016, Canada and the UNHCR helped launch the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative to help other countries begin private sponsorship programs.

Some organizations, especially religious organizations, have sponsored refugees regularly for decades. Many of these refugees are referred by the UNHCR. “The Canadian sponsors that come back year after year, are an amazingly important asset to the UNHCR because they are a big player,” says Molloy. “Not many people get resettled in any year,” but for those who do, “a lot of them get resettled by our private sponsors. It’s really an important program, and not just for Canada, but literally for the world.”

The Syrian crisis has highlighted Canada’s refugee resettlement. About 62,000 Syrian refugees have resettled in Canada since 2015. More than half were privately sponsored. During the height of the resettlement in 2015 and 2016, Canadian public servants worked closely with UNHCR staff overseas. “We got to the stage [where





UNHCR staff were] loading cases into our system directly to save time,” says Molloy.

“We’re at a point now where the private sponsorship is double the government refugee program,” says Casasola, who worked with private sponsors before joining the UNHCR. “But the government is slowly increasing the targets of the government refugee program in response to our appeals, as part of Canada’s plan to increase immigration overall.” The reliance on private sponsorship can be concerning.

“There’s no obligation on Canadians to sponsor refugees,” says Shauna Labman, a professor at the University of Winnipeg who has worked for the UNHCR in India. “The government creates the space for it, and Canadians step up to fill that space. What refugee advocates and private sponsors have always said is that the program is based on the principle of additionality. That means it should be additional to the government responsibility and not a replacement to the government commitment to refugees.”

The division of responsibility isn’t always so clear, Casasola says. Privately sponsored refugees access some services the federal government funds, like language classes. Yet, many of these services also rely on support from volunteers or private funders.

The UNHCR also advocates for other ways of bringing refugees to Canada. In recent years, the federal government announced an initiative to enable refugees to come to Canada through existing economic immigration programs. These refugees would be included as one of the economic immigrants Canada has agreed to welcome. This would create spaces for additional refugees to come to Canada. Casasola says only a few countries are considering programs like this. “Canada is way out ahead.”


New pathways for resettlement are crucial. The COVID-19 pandemic has also drastically decreased the number of refugees who can be resettled, and it’s unclear how long this impact will last. Some are concerned that climate change may cause more people to be displaced worldwide.

“The reality is, if we didn’t have the UNHCR, we’d have to invent it again today,” says Molloy. “We’re just lucky to have one that has deep roots and a deep culture and is out there.”

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MEAGAN GILLMORE is a freelance writer in Toronto, ON.

# READ LEARN CODE



## The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations

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**GRADE LEVEL:** Grades 9 to 12    **DURATION:** 4 to 5 classes

By Susan Hughes

### KEY CONCEPTS AND ISSUES

With its broad-reaching mandate and its multiplicity of arms and interests, the United Nations (UN), which makes decisions that might seem distant and removed from individuals here in Canada, does affect us all personally. Students will discuss what it means to be a global citizen and reflect on the value of the UN as an international institution. How do actions and policies of the UN as an international institution affect you personally as individuals, Canadian citizens, and global citizens?

- Political Identity
- Concept of Personal Identity
- Concept of Canadian Identity
- Cause and Consequence
- Historical Significance

### MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Computers or devices with Internet access
- Materials needed for preparing presentations (notebooks, pens)

### EXPECTATIONS/OUTCOMES

The overall expectations listed below serve as an entry point for teachers. Teachers are encouraged to make connections to specific expectations in their region and grade.

Students will:

- Analyze the goals, methods, and accomplishments of the UN that have contributed to the evolution of human rights in different regions since its creation
- Analyse rights and responsibilities of citizenship within a global context
- Explain how various individuals, groups, and events, including some major international events, contributed to the development of identities, citizenship, and heritage in Canada
- Assess the responsibility of governments and international bodies for the promotion and protection of human rights
- Communicate their ideas, arguments, and conclusions using various formats and styles, as appropriate for the audience and purpose.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

- Canadian and World Studies/Canadian History (various)
- Law
- Civics and Citizenship/Politics in Action
- English Language Arts
- Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice

## BACKGROUND

The United Nations was founded in 1945 after the destruction and horror of the Second World War and the Holocaust. The founders wanted to create an international organization that could prevent future catastrophes. The mandate of the UN was to assist nations in solving complex world problems and avoiding or resolving conflicts by encouraging constructive and open communication between nations. For example, today, in 2020, the UN has 193 member states, including Canada, that has been a member of the UN since the very beginning.

All member states have agreed on a set of rules laid out in the UN Charter that are organized into three main themes: peace and security, the protection and promotion of human rights, and human development. Three fundamental rules in the Charter are: all countries are equal; all countries must avoid using force or threatening to use force against another country; and all countries must try to settle their differences by



Headquarters of the United Nations in New York City, United States

peaceful means. The UN has four key documents: the UN Charter; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Statute of the International Court of Justice.

The United Nations is an important institution with which most students will be familiar. But it may seem vast and confusing in structure and operation. Indeed, it is actually a system, or “family,” consisting of the UN itself—that is made up of six main organs (General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat)—and the UN’s many programmes, funds, and specialized agencies, each with its own leadership and budget.

This is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the UN, yet it’s no wonder students can find it difficult to understand how this body affects us all personally. In a post-COVID-19 world, however, there may be an opportunity for the UN to play a greater and more visible role in reflecting, and taking action on, the contemporary concerns of global citizens, including students.

## STEP ONE: TEACHER DIRECTED DISCUSSION

1. Explain to students that this is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the UN, an international organization that plays a strong and important role in world affairs.
  - What are examples of ways that the work done by it or one of its affiliates affects people around the world? (If necessary, post a list of the UN

organizations or conventions for students to refer to.) Responses could include the UN's concern with environmental issues (air and water pollution, wildlife preservation) and climate change; Internet connectivity standards; human rights and freedoms; international air traffic rules; COVID-19 standards and the search for a vaccine; and so on.

2. This year a UN food agency, the World Food Programme (WFP), won the Nobel Peace prize, worth about CDN\$1.4 million. According to the UN, aggravated by the control measures put in place because of the coronavirus pandemic, the current food crisis is the biggest the world has struggled with in 50 years. But with one in nine people globally without enough to eat, “[the] WFP’s annual funding shortfall is widening to close to US\$5-billion,” said Julie Marshall, the WFP’s Canadian spokesperson. The Nobel committee commented: “The need for international solidarity and multilateral co-operation is more conspicuous than ever.”

- Was the WFP a good choice for this prestigious prize, in your opinion? Explain your reasons.
- Will it draw attention to the food crisis and have the desired results?
- Should UN member states have a responsibility to assist all other nations in achieving food security?

## STEP TWO: STUDENT-LED EXPLORATION

A recent UN survey with over 1 million respondents from all 193 member states about their expectations for global institutions like the UN and their priorities for the future showed the pandemic had highlighted the public's awareness of global inequalities.

- What were *your* main global concerns before the pandemic? How has the pandemic changed your sense of the world and/or your global priorities? What are they now, and why?
- Do you think the UN could play a more important role in the world post-pandemic? How could it have a positive effect on your own global concerns and priorities?

## STEP THREE: FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Students view several award-winning films of their choice created by youth for the [PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival](#)—which is a UN-sponsored initiative with videos focusing on themes of migration, diversity, and social inclusion—in the Children's Rights or Human Rights categories and record their reflections.

In small groups, students consider:

### 1. What are our fundamental rights?

- What are the fundamental rights that all Canadians should have?
- What are the fundamental rights that all human beings should have?
- Do your lists have any similarities or differences? Why?
- Why are rights sometimes denied? (Why are some groups sometimes marginalized or treated inequitably?)

### 2. Who is responsible for human rights?

- What role or responsibility do individuals have to protect human rights?
- Should individual governments take sole responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights?
- Why do we need to create international bodies such as the UN to promote and protect human rights?
- Why do we need our rights and responsibilities enshrined in constitutions, laws, conventions, and declarations?

After the discussion, students share their thoughts in writing.

## STEP FOUR: CULMINATING ACTIVITY

### 1. Preparing for the Activity: You and the UN

One of the key roles of the United Nations is to uphold and champion the rights of global citizens, especially through one of these five efforts that focuses on rights:

- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1948]
- Geneva Conventions [1949]
- Convention on the Rights of the Child [1989]
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [2006]
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People [2007]

The UN also works to unite countries around the world in tackling the global climate emergency; to maintain peace and security globally; to deliver humanitarian aid; to promote sustainable development; and to uphold international law.

Discuss with students:

- What is the UN's role in the world?
- Are its actions important, in your opinion?
- How do the actions of the UN affect you directly?

## 2. Executing the Activity

Students view the [“What We Do” page](#) on the UN website and choose a section of interest to investigate more closely, especially to find how it affects them personally.

- What happened to prompt the creation of this section of the UN?
- What is one way in which a UN declaration or action arising from this concern has affected Canadians directly? (For example, did it change our views or

actions? How do you know?) Give examples to show change and/or continuity.

- What is one way in which it has affected you directly?

Students record their thoughts using text, audio, images, or video. They share their work with the class.

## 3. Final Critique/Reflection

- In what ways do you feel your work is successful?
- In what ways would you change your work to improve it?
- How does your work reflect your understanding of this section of the UN and its effect on Canada and on you personally?

## OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- The UN has a charter. A charter, or constitution, sets out in writing the basic principles and laws of a nation, state, or social group. It determines the powers and duties of the group and guarantees certain rights to the people in it. In small groups, review the UN's charter and then create a charter for your classroom and/or school. Discuss how you'll make final decisions on which rules to confirm.
- Each province and territory in Canada has a human rights code. All human rights legislation must follow the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,



UN Security Council Chamber in New York Headquarters

passed in 1982, but they do not all offer the same human rights protections. With students, use the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion’s online [“Overview of Human Rights Codes by Province and Territory”](#) publication to compare the human rights code in their province or territory with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

- In 2019, the United Nations launched a [book club](#) for children ages 6 to 12 to learn about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Challenge students to analyze this initiative. Does it achieve its purpose? Does it also help young individual Canadians connect in a meaningful way with these goals, with other children around the world, and with the UN?
- Every year, the UN updates 11 of its actions and publishes these on a “UN Card” to show how the organization is affecting people around the world on a daily basis. Have students review the [75<sup>th</sup> anniversary UN Card](#) (they can find it on the UN site by searching “UN card”) and several previous cards, and have them discuss: Why do you think a card like this is useful? Do you connect to this individually, as a Canadian, or as a global citizen and if so, why? Who do you think decides what data to include on the card, and why? What questions do you have after reading this?



- Students can make posters, murals, or decorate classroom or hallway bulletin boards to celebrate

United Nations Day, which is recognized annually on October 24. Students can share information about the significance of the UN to fellow students, highlighting its global efforts and successes, and making suggestions about how they can commemorate the day.

- The United Nations has a [Twitter account](#). So does the [UN Programme on Youth](#). Have students find and follow either or both of these Twitter accounts for two weeks or so. They can record the type of topics tweeted and retweeted. What purpose do these tweets and retweets fulfill? What is your personal response to what you learn from these tweets? What is your political response? If appropriate, tweet back the UN and record your experience.
- For a more intensive focus, set aside a full day for a model United Nations debate in your classroom. Choose a resolution that reflects a contemporary world problem. Students can represent UN General Assembly nations; they research to learn about the country and how it might react to the resolution and why. Students present their country’s arguments during an organized debate. (There are several good resources to help structure the experience, including the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation’s [socially based curriculum unit plan](#) which is available on their website.)

## RESOURCES

### Useful Twitter Accounts:

- [UN Twitter account](#)
- [UN Youth Twitter account](#)

### General Websites:

- [United Nations](#)
- [UN75: 2020 and Beyond](#)—A Section of the UN’s Website Dedicated to the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- [Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation](#)
- [Human Rights Watch](#)
- [Amnesty International Canada](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#)



- [Youth for Human Rights](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)—Canada’s Approach to Advancing Human Rights

- Are students familiar with the role of the UN in affecting society in positive ways, including how it affects themselves personally?

### Video Documentaries:

- [PLURAL+](#) Youth Video Festival on Migration, Diversity, and Social Inclusion: videos created by youth that focus on subjects such as children’s and human rights; sponsored by the [UN Alliance of Civilizations](#) and the [International Organization of Migration](#), along with a network of 50+ partner organizations around the globe
- [“For Everyone, Everywhere: The Making of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”](#) This video can be found online in the UN Audiovisual Library via the UN Multimedia website.

### After (Post-Implementation)

- Students will describe their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Canada.
- Students will describe their reflections on their rights and responsibilities as global citizens.
- Students will reflect a clear general understanding of the organization of the UN, its goals, and its methods.
- Students will reflect on the role of the UN in establishing laws and conventions, especially in regard to promoting and protecting human rights.
- Students will show an understanding of the ways in which the UN positively affects society, including how it affects them personally.

### Children’s books (for students ages 5 and up):

- *This Child, Every Child: A Book About the World’s Children* by David J. Smith (Kids Can Press, 2011)
- *People Who Said No: Courage Against Oppression* by Laura Scandiffio (Annick Press, 2012)
- *We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures* by Amnesty International (Frances Lincoln Children’s Books, 2008)

### Teacher Evaluation Questions

#### Before (Pre-implementation)

- Do you have a general understanding of your rights and responsibilities as citizens of Canada and as global citizens?
- Do you have a clear general understanding of the organization of the UN, its goals, and methods?
- Do you have any prior understanding of the role of the UN in establishing international laws and conventions, especially in regard to promoting and protecting human rights?
- Are you familiar with the role of the UN in affecting society in positive ways, including how it affects yourself personally?

## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

### Student Evaluation Questions Specific to the Lesson Plan

#### Before (Pre-Implementation)

- Do students have a general understanding of their own rights and responsibilities as citizens of Canada?
- Do students have a general understanding of their own rights and responsibilities as global citizens?
- Do students have a clear general understanding of the organization of the UN, its goals, and methods?
- Do students have any prior understanding of the role of the UN in establishing international laws and conventions, especially in regard to promoting and protecting human rights?

#### After (Post-Implementation)

- Describe your rights and responsibilities as Canadian citizens and global citizens.
- Describe in general how the UN is organized, its goals, and its methods.
- Have a clear understanding of the importance of the UN in establishing international laws and conventions.
- Understand how and why the UN affects society and individuals in positive ways.

## GENERAL RUBRIC

	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	Student participated limitedly in the teacher-directed discussions	Student participated adequately in the teacher-directed discussions	Student participated actively in the teacher-directed discussions	Student participated exemplarily in the teacher-directed discussions
<b>Content</b>	Student demonstrated limited understanding of concepts, facts, and terms	Student demonstrated some understanding of concepts, facts, and terms	Student demonstrated considerable understanding of concepts, facts, and terms	Student demonstrated thorough understanding of concepts, facts, and terms
<b>Written Work</b>	Student's written reflections were confusing, poorly structured, and had many grammatical errors	Student's written reflections were generally clear and had some structure, but numerous grammatical errors	Student's written reflections were clear and well-structured, but had a few errors	Student's written reflections were very clear, well-organized, and had virtually no errors
<b>Presentation</b>	Student's presentation was confusing, lacked emphasis and energy, and resulted in no discussion	Student's presentation was generally clear, but lacked energy and emphasis, and resulted in little discussion	Student's presentation was clear, vibrantly presented, and resulted in a good discussion	Student's presentation was very clear, enthusiastically presented, and resulted in an engaging discussion
<b>Group Work</b>	Students made a minimal contribution to the group; very little cooperation	Students made some contribution to the group, but cooperation was superficial	Students made a considerable contribution to the group, with a good level of cooperation	Students made a significant contribution to the group, with an excellent level of cooperation

## SPECIFIC RUBRIC

	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>
<b>Step One</b>	Student demonstrated a limited understanding of the role of the UN	Student demonstrated a basic understanding of the role of the UN	Student demonstrated a good understanding of the role of the UN	Student demonstrated a thorough understanding of the role of the UN
<b>Step Two</b>	Student contributed in a limited way to an exploration and discussion of their priorities and the potential of the UN's role post-pandemic	Student contributed adequately to an exploration and discussion of their priorities and the potential of the UN's role post-pandemic	Student contributed actively to an exploration and discussion of their priorities and the potential of the UN's role post-pandemic	Student contributed exemplarily to an exploration and discussion of their priorities and the potential of the UN's role post-pandemic
<b>Step Three</b>	Student's written work demonstrated a limited understanding of the struggles to establish universal respect for human rights and the reasons for enshrining human rights in laws and conventions	Student's written work provided some information reflecting an understanding of the struggles to establish universal respect for human rights and the reasons for enshrining human rights in laws and conventions	Student's written work provided good information reflecting an understanding of the struggles to establish universal respect for human rights and the reasons for enshrining human rights in laws and conventions	Student's written work provided thorough information reflecting an understanding of the struggles to establish universal respect for human rights and the reasons for enshrining human rights in laws and conventions
<b>Step Four</b>	Student's presentation demonstrated a limited ability to closely investigate a section of the UN, especially to reveal how it affects them personally	Student's presentation demonstrated an adequate ability to closely investigate a section of the UN, especially to reveal how it affects them personally	Student's presentation demonstrated a good ability to closely investigate a section of the UN, especially to reveal how it affects them personally	Student's presentation demonstrated a strong ability to closely investigate a section of the UN, especially to reveal how it affects them personally

# Human Rights: Canada's Successes Shouldn't Overshadow Its Failures

By Martha Beach

Many of us likely take basic universal human rights for granted. Yet in a legal sense, human rights have existed for less than 75 years. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was proclaimed by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on December 10, 1948, it drew a distinct starting line for a large body of international human rights laws, including here in Canada.

Canadian lawyer and scholar John Peters Humphrey became director of the UN Division of Human Rights in 1946 and played a key role in drafting the UDHR. In Humphrey's time, Canada was apathetic (and in some cases politically opposed) towards implementing such laws. Since then, interest and commitment has grown and in many respects Canada is touted as a leader in human rights. But we can't let that success overshadow the fact we've got a long way to go in certain areas.

Humphrey was a young law professor at McGill University and was known as an authority on international law. Humphrey was born in Hampton, NB. By the age of 11, he'd lost both parents to cancer and one of his arms due to a fire. As a result, his young life was filled with taunts and bullying. At the age of 15, he started at Mount Allison University, in Sackville, NB, but soon moved to Montreal where he lived with his sister and began what would become one of four degrees at McGill University. His interest in commerce turned into a passion for law and politics. Upon graduating law school, Humphrey went to Paris on a scholarship and became even more entrenched in international law. When he returned home, he began teaching at McGill and received his Masters in international law. As a member of the arts community in Montreal, he ended up meeting French refugee Henri Laugier who would later become assistant secretary-general at the fledgling UN in 1946. It was Laugier who recommended Humphrey as director of the UN Human Rights Division.

The human rights commission included 18 members of different legal and cultural backgrounds from several countries, including Lebanon, China, France, and Australia. It was chaired by former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. The team had the difficult task of creating a human rights declaration that all countries could hold as their own, transcending politics, religion, and culture. The UDHR is a direct response to the atrocities committed throughout the Second World War.

People around the globe were horrified by what took place throughout the late 1930s up to the mid 1940s, and world leaders did not want the grisly events to repeat themselves. The goal of the commission was to create a road map to guarantee that each individual on the planet would have their rights clearly defined and defended.

Humphrey worked as the principal author to draft the UDHR's 30 articles, which fall under two traditional divisions: civil and political rights; as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

The articles run the gamut, from freedom of opinion and expression, the right to vote, to the right to fair wages and safe working conditions, and the right to speak your native tongue. The first two articles address equality and freedom from discrimination. The third and fourth articles focus on liberty and life free of servitude. While many countries do not overtly legally support slavery, the issue of subjugation is still a hot-button issue, where servitude has shifted from one person owning another to a more insidious system of under-paid (and often dangerous) labour. Articles 6 through 12 deal with law, representation before courts and tribunals, and penalization. Articles 13 through 17 address freedom of movement from country to country, the right to own property, to seek asylum, the right to choose to start a family and practice any religion you choose. Thoughts, opinions, and the right to expression and participation in government process show up in articles 18 to 21. The right to work, pursue goals, the right to take holiday and leisure time are all addressed in articles 22 to 24. Article 25 is about adequate standards of living, so essentially the right to live out of poverty. Article 26 is a long one, all about education. Article 27 looks at arts and culture. Articles 28 through 30 essentially underline that every person is free to live life as they choose, so long as it is in a responsible and non-harmful manner that does not contradict the UDHR itself.

Those first two articles form the basis for Canada's 1977 Human Rights Act, and also inspired our 1960 Bill of Rights and the 1982 Charter of Civil Rights. But we didn't reach that point in a unified or straightforward manner. In 1946, while Canada was denying due process to suspected spies and disenfranchised Japanese Canadians, the UN announced its intention to draft the UDHR. Politically, the announcement caused concern and disinterest. In 1948, Humphreys wrote, "I knew the international promotion of

human rights had no priority in Canadian foreign policy." Indeed, initially political naysayers included members of the federal cabinet and the Canadian Bar Association. But feeling pressured by allies—and wanting to avoid voting alongside unfavourable groups like Saudi Arabia, the Communist Bloc, and South Africa—Canada did support the final UDHR vote in 1948. What's more, the general population was apathetic toward the idea of international human rights laws. That apathy continued for more than a decade, until dozens of human rights and civil liberties groups were founded as part of the global human rights movements of the '60s and '70s. Since then, Canada has steadily increased its commitment to the principles outlined by the UDHR.

Over the last 20 years we've shed a light on collective human rights, those that belong to groups of people, that can not be exercised unless others also do so. This is one place where Canada excels. "Canada has been making inroads on LGBTQ+ rights," says Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann, Canada research chair in international human rights from 2003 to 2016. When the UDHR was proclaimed, rights of gay and transgender people were unheard of. Now, we are international leaders in the area of LGBTQ+ rights, even though they are not officially part of the UN's declaration.

There are countries that even view these issues as forms of cultural imperialism, namely Russia, parts of Eastern Europe, and certain areas in Africa. "Forty years ago, it was women's rights. Now, LGBTQ+ and especially trans rights are the new scapegoat," Howard-Hassmann says. So, for example, when a foreign aid package specifies the need to support the LGBTQ+ community or the Prime Minister makes a speech that verbally supports those communities, it's often labelled cultural imperialism by the local government.

What's more, we have not backtracked on political and civil rights. We have (comparatively) good voter registration. We are often cited as a leader in the field of refugee rights and a model for other countries to follow: Canada received the 1986 Nansen Medal for "the major and sustained contribution made by the People of Canada to the cause of refugees."

But that specific accomplishment took place more than 30 years ago and now we Canadians are a bit too quick to pat ourselves on the back. "We congratulate ourselves for taking in over 40,000 Syrians," says Howard-

Hassmann. “And that is better than zero, or 10,000. But the governments that currently house 700,000 refugees are middle- to low-income countries.” Safe to say, it’s not a sustainable, equitable, or ideal situation. “Now, I agree it’s best to keep people close to home,” she continues, “but I think Canada could take more.” Not only are people fleeing their homes due to war, violence and persecution, but also due to environmental changes. By 2050, there will be an estimated 200 million climate refugees fleeing scorching heat, drought, and rising sea levels. This is a pressing international issue Canada must address.

The area of human rights where Canada fails miserably here at home is Indigenous peoples’ rights. In 2007, the UN General Assembly passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). At that time, Canada did not endorse the declaration. Nearly a decade passed before the government announced support for UNDRIP, spurred by the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report in December 2015, which listed ratifying UNDRIP as one of its calls to action. In May 2016, the Trudeau government finally promised to support UNDRIP, though they did not introduce any legislation. Shortly thereafter, the government approved the Trans Mountain Pipeline extension, and Trudeau noted the First Nations impacted by the project do not have veto power over energy projects. This goes against an UNDRIP clause that says “free, prior and informed consent” of Indigenous peoples is required for matters that impact their communities. So far, British Columbia is the only province on track to translate UNDRIP support into real provincial law.

Many Canadians had high hopes for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Reparations are mainly

apologies, plus museums, monuments, and financial reparations in some cases. “But the government will only apologize for things they won’t do again,” says Howard-Hassmann. “So they apologized for residential schools. We won’t do residential schools again. But they won’t apologize for poor education, higher rates of incarceration, poverty, and much more.”

“Indigenous peoples’ rights is the biggest failure. The next biggest is poverty,” says Howard-Hassmann. Access to food falls within that category. Canada has no national food policies. Food is heavily dependent on a patchwork of services that vary depending on the city, region or province. Furthermore, Howard-Hassmann says Canada falls down on article 25, which states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and his family, including clothing, housing and medical care.” It sounds like a no-brainer—of course every person deserves a good meal, a shirt on their back, a warm place to live, and care should they fall ill. But here in Canada “we adhere to minimal standards,” Howard-Hassmann says. Over the last few years, Canada has been fairly successful in pulling children out of poverty on a federal level. “But provincially, we are not providing adequate standards of living for all of Canada’s population.”

Canada’s third area of concern is people who are marginalized systematically. “On a legal level, we don’t have laws that discriminate, but of course that exists on a social level,” says Howard-Hassmann. However, if we address article 25 we can change that system. Things like universal basic income and universal childcare would go a long way to helping those most in need. “That would help a lot of marginalized people without other measures in place.”

Despite all the areas we need to improve, Canada should be proud that a Canadian lawyer, professor and scholar played such a pivotal role in the creation of international human rights. It was no easy task, and it has helped lay the foundation for countries around the globe to improve and implement human rights legislation, including here in Canada. What’s important is to keep looking forward and, as a population, strive to continue to improve life for all Canadians.

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MARTHA BEACH is a graduate of Ryerson University’s journalism program. Currently, she is a freelance writer and factchecker in Toronto.



# Guardians of Global Peace: Is Peacekeeping Still Relevant?

By Lynn Greiner

Given the United Nations mandate to maintain international peace and security, the question of the relevance of peacekeeping missions seems ironic. That is, after all, what the UN and its members are all about, according to the [organization's charter](#). Chapters VI and VII (articles 33-51) speak in detail about resolution of disputes and reactions to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression. Chapter VIII talks about regional arrangements or agencies that may also do peacekeeping. Yet the function has changed somewhat over the years.

Since the beginning, three [basic principles](#) govern UN peacekeeping operations:

**1. Consent of the parties.** The main parties in the conflict must agree to the deployment of operations, and consent to a political process for resolution of the dispute. The UN notes on its website, “In the absence of such consent, a peacekeeping operation risks becoming a party to the conflict; and being drawn towards enforcement action, and away from its fundamental role of keeping the peace.” However, even if consent has been given at high levels, there’s no guarantee that local participants or other armed groups will be in agreement.

**2. Impartiality.** Peacekeepers, says the site, should be “impartial in their dealings with the parties to the conflict, but not neutral in the execution of their mandate.” In other words, actions by any of the parties that violate the undertakings of the peace process or international norms and principles must not be condoned, lest the operation’s credibility and legitimacy be compromised.

**3. Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.** While UN peacekeeping forces are not an enforcement tool, they are allowed to use force at the tactical level in self-defence and in defence of their mandate, but only with the approval of the Security Council. The principles emphasize that use of force should be a last resort, and peacekeepers should employ the minimum required to address the situation without losing the parties’ consent for the mission. In some circumstances, “robust” peacekeeping is authorized, allowing use of all necessary force to prevent violent attempts to disrupt the political process, to protect citizens, or to assist authorities in maintaining law and order.



Canadian and Argentinian peacekeepers on foot patrol in Gonaives, Haiti. Photo courtesy Department of National Defence/Veterans Affairs Canada.



The first two of more than 70 UN peacekeeping missions were deployed in 1948, and are, unhappily, still active today: the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in the Middle East and the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP).

However, says Martin Shadwick, York University faculty member and expert in Canadian defense policy and the military, the operations can be roughly split into two eras. “If you’re looking for a key pivot point with peacekeeping, one of the ones that you could cite would be the end of the Cold War,” he says. “So there was sort of the Cold War era of peacekeeping, and then there was the post-Cold War era of peacekeeping. So we’re talking early 1990s, roughly.”

Post-Cold War peacekeeping, he says, is quite different to peacekeeping in the 1950s and ’60s when Canada’s external affairs minister (and later Prime Minister) Lester B. Pearson proposed a United Nations police force to help resolve the 1956 Suez Crisis (Pearson received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts).

A 1995 article by historian [Norman Hillmer](#) in the [Proceedings of the XXIst Colloquium of the International Commission of Military History](#), page 539, explains.

“Not so long ago, peacekeeping was a well-understood concept. It was a contradiction: non-threatening military activity, involving the use of unarmed or lightly armed personnel for the purposes of truce observation or interposition between parties to a cease-fire. The powers of peacekeepers were few. They were on the line in Cyprus or between Arab and Israeli in the Sinai to react, monitor, pacify, deter even, but not to take the offensive, except in extremis. A prerequisite of peacekeeping was the consent

of the former belligerents. Another was the impartiality of the peacekeeping force.

Peacekeeping did not ensure peace, or carry with it any sure mechanism for a negotiated settlement, and it was frequently criticized on that score. Lester B. Pearson, the Canadian diplomat who was instrumental in the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) in the wake of the 1956 Suez Crisis, thought that there must be a direct and rapid link between peacekeeping and peacemaking. But the two functions are quite separate. Peacekeeping is simply an expedient, meant to ease the transition from hostility to stability, to diffuse tension and contain aggression.”

At the end of the Cold War, however, everything changed. Missions increasingly became between warring factions within a country, not between two countries, and their scope expanded to include more complex functions such as building sustainable governance, monitoring human rights, reforming security sectors, and even the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants. And along with the military members of the missions came administrators, economists, police officers, legal experts, electoral observers, human rights monitors, civil affairs and governance specialists, humanitarian workers, communications and public information experts, and more.

Between 1989 and 1994, the Security Council authorized 20 new peacekeeping operations, which increased the number of peacekeepers from 11,000 to 75,000 to not only help implement complex peace agreements, but to reorganize military and police and elect new governments and build democratic institutions in affected countries.



The program was a victim of its own success. In the mid-1990s, the Security Council was unable to provide sufficient resources, and in some cases, sent peacekeepers into areas where there was still active combat, where peace agreements were ignored by the parties involved, and where political support was lacking. Three high-profile, disastrous missions in particular—in the former [Yugoslavia](#), [Rwanda](#), and [Somalia](#)—led to criticism, a cutback in the number of new peacekeeping missions, and a re-examination of the mandate to prevent additional such failures even while long-term operations in Cyprus, Asia, and the Middle East continued.

The world did not stop having crises requiring peacekeepers, however. In the latter half of the 1990s, six more peacekeeping missions were authorized, in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Guatemala, and Haiti.

At the turn of the 21st century, the UN again examined peacekeeping efforts with the goal of improving its processes for implementing and managing missions, as well as seeking a renewal of their commitment from member states. This led to several initiatives by successive Secretaries-General: the appointment in October 2014 of the [High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations](#) (HIPPO) to assess issues facing operations in the current world and in the future by Ban Ki-moon, and the March 2018 launch by his successor, current Secretary-General António Guterres, of [Action for Peacekeeping](#) (A4P), whose goal was to reach a formal agreement by the end of 2018 on principles and commitments that created a model for peacekeeping operations of the future.

In June 2015, the [HIPPO Report](#) was released and in September, the Secretary-General issued a [summary](#) and action plan entitled *The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*. In it, Guterres bemoaned the diminishment of peace operations, noting, “Over six decades, they have shown a remarkable capacity to adjust to evolving situations and new demands, guided by well-established principles. However, missions are struggling to cope with the spread and intensity of conflicts today, and the lack of unity among Member States over their scope and application is thwarting their adaptation. Within peace operations, the shameful actions of some individuals are tarnishing the

efforts of tens of thousands. I am convinced that we can and must do more to tackle such profound challenges.”

“However,” he concludes, “United Nations peace operations are only one of the tools that we urgently need. Without focused commitment on the part of Member States, the whole United Nations system, regional partners and other organizations to advancing and consolidating peace, today’s conflicts will rage into tomorrow, and yesterday’s conflicts will violently return. Peace operations are a collective tool. They are a vital part of a global commitment to preventing and resolving conflict, protecting civilians and sustaining peace. Adapting them requires a system-wide effort and the active engagement and support of the entire membership. I urge Member States to join me in this endeavour.”

The result of Guterres’ A4P was the [A4P Declaration of Shared Commitments](#), now endorsed by more than 150 countries that expanded on Ban’s action plan. It focuses on eight key areas:

- Politics
- Women, peace, and security
- Protection
- Safety and security
- Performance and accountability
- Peacebuilding and sustaining peace
- Partnerships
- Conduct of peacekeepers and peacekeeping operations



It’s working. A [survey](#) conducted in August 2019 revealed that all involved parties (the Secretariat, member states, and society at large) felt that progress towards A4P implementation had been made to some extent in all eight areas.

So, to return to our original question: is peacekeeping still relevant? Yes, the United Nations is working to make it so. And, said Shadwick, “People just like to peacekeep. They may not have ever fully understood it or understood the risk or maybe not been fully cognitive of the switch between traditional peacekeeping and the more contemporary kind, but there was always that basic reservoir of goodwill. And I think that’s still out there.”

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LYNN GREINER is a freelance writer who has covered technology, history, business, and many other areas for more than 20 years.

# Securing the World From War: Examining the UN Security Council

By Carolyn Gruske

There have been no outright wars between the world's major powers and no nuclear conflicts since the end of the Second World War in 1945.

It's that fact that causes some, including former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, Paul Heinbecker, to say that the United Nations Security Council is an important body that has served its purpose and has done so successfully.

"That's a very long time for there not to have been a war," says Heinbecker who has also been a foreign policy advisor to Canadian prime ministers, including Brian Mulroney and Jean Chrétien. "That's partly because the most powerful countries are on the Security Council and they're in non-stop diplomacy in New York, day in and day out, 24/7. A lot of what they're doing amounts to preventing conflict."

That's not to say that the Security Council is completely successful, or that there haven't been wars or military engagements or that people and nations don't see the need to reform it.

## HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

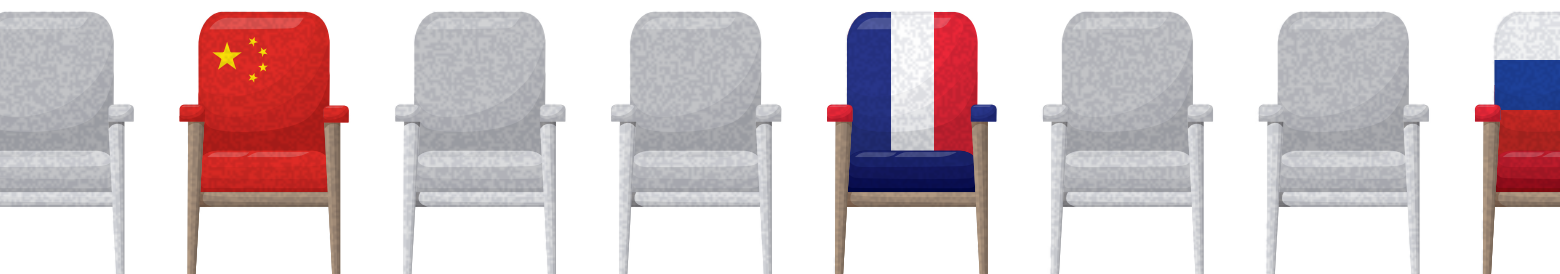
The Security Council has two types of members: permanent members and non-permanent ones. There are five countries (referred to as the P5) with permanent membership: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The rest of the world's countries

vie to be elected to two-year terms on the Council. They run against nations in their geographical regions. The five regions are: the African group, the Asia-Pacific group, the Eastern European group, the Latin American and Caribbean group, and the Western European and Others group. Canada is one of the Others.

Besides being permanent members, the P5 are distinguished in another way from the rest of the Council members. They each have a veto, and it is this veto that has been a source of friction since the beginning, explained former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, Allan Rock.

"The trouble with the Security Council is the veto. The P5, as part of the bargain in 1945 [that created the UN] were given a veto over what goes over the Council's agenda and what resolutions are passed. During the Cold War, when the Soviet Union and the West were constantly at loggerheads, the Council was very, very frequently paralyzed for long periods of time, because the Soviet veto would prevent the [other countries] from putting items on the agenda. As China has emerged as a significant power, it has also used the veto to put an end to discussions it found to be politically unpleasant."

Rock, now a law professor at the University of Ottawa, believes that the Security Council had its "golden age" from roughly 1990 until the mid-2000s, "when there were very few vetoes... a lot of common ground, and... agreement on thematic issues like women, peace and security, and



human security, including protection of civilians. It was a very fruitful period, and Canada was a large part of that for sure.”

Since then, he cites the Russian President Vladimir Putin’s growing “autocratic” tendencies and China’s increasingly “aggressive presence on the world stage” as influences that have lessened the effectiveness of the Council, permitting tragedies to occur in Myanmar and Yemen and Syria without significant action being taken by the Council.

### POWERS AND INFLUENCE ON AND OFF THE COUNCIL

The Security Council is unlike other UN bodies or agencies in one vital way, says Rock. “When the Security Council speaks, it has the force of international law and countries are obligated to obey its resolutions, no two ways about it. That’s where the real power is.”

He explained that under chapter seven of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council can authorize military intervention. (This is what leads to sending in peacekeepers.) The Council can also refer cases to the International Criminal Court, an independent judicial body with jurisdiction over persons charged with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Additionally, the Council has the ability to impose sanctions. Currently, there are 14 regimes under UN sanctions: North Korea, Iran, Mali, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Yemen, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Eritrea, Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, and ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida, and the Taliban.

“It’s also supposed to have a certain moral authority, so when the Security Council speaks, people are supposed to listen,” says Rock.

### BEHIND-THE-SCENES

Throughout its history, there have been moments at the United Nations that have captured worldwide attention, and although these kinds of events make history, sometimes it’s the quieter happenings that are more memorable for the people involved.

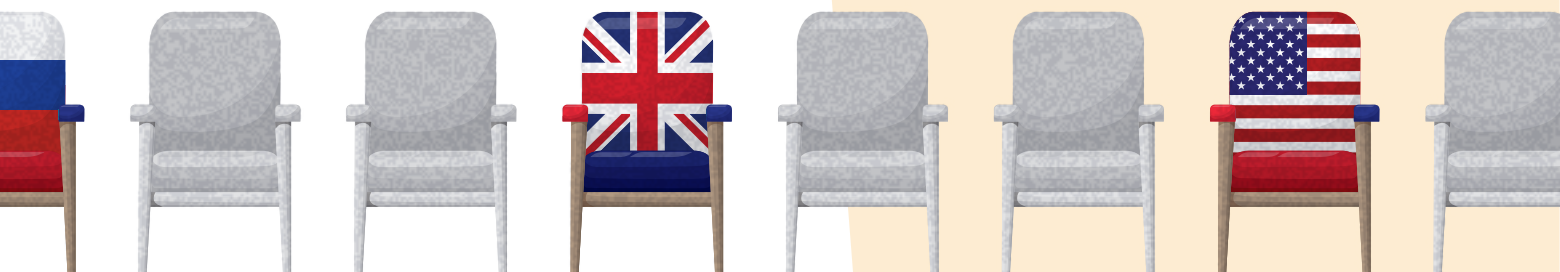
Former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, Paul Heinbecker has more than a few of those types of recollections.

Heinbecker was there in 2003, for example, when US Secretary of State Colin Powell told the Security Council and the world there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq—justifying the US taking military action against the nation in what would be the Second Gulf War. The weapons were later proven not to exist.

“I was on the floor of the Security Council, as it happens, when Colin Powell made his famous speech about weapons of mass destruction. I was standing with the Egyptian ambassador and Colin Powell was standing almost beside us. We turned the conversation to him and the Egyptian ambassador said to him: ‘You can probably win the war in six months. It will take you 60 years to pacify the place. And it will take 600 years before the Arabs forgive you for what you’ve done.’”

Related to that situation, Heinbecker also recalled a moment when US Senators John Kerry and Edward (Ted) Kennedy visited the UN to get some perspective about what was happening in Iraq. Heinbecker was one of the people the pair met.

“Each of us gave our perspective on what was going on. We told them there was no *casus belli*—there were no grounds—for a war. The Security Council was going to approve a resolution for going to war and nobody in New York, other than the Americans, the British and the Spanish believed that war was necessary. Again, one of my Arab colleagues said to these two American senators that what the United States was doing was swallowing a razor blade in Iraq. It would be painful and bloody to remove it.”



Historically, Canada had a seat approximately every ten years or so since the Council was created. Heinbecker's tenure as ambassador, which lasted from 2000 to 2004 included a six-month period when Canada had a seat on the Security Council. He jokes that he is the "last Canadian" on the Council as the country hasn't won a seat since.

While the Security Council may be powerful and prestigious, other countries can achieve significant accomplishments without a seat. Heinbecker explains it took two or three years, for example, for countries to push changes through the General Assembly regarding the refugee determination system, but the task was eventually accomplished.

"In New York, we had something called a human security agenda for Canada, and that had to do with creating the International Criminal Court (ICC), creating the landmines treaty which prevented the production, sale, and use of landmines. The Responsibility to Protect (RTP) was another related idea that was a Canadian issue. If you have an agenda and you want to achieve something, you can."

As an example, he describes some of the ICC negotiations. The US was against the creation of the ICC to avoid any possibilities of its military members being tried before an international court. At the time when this was being negotiated, a peacekeeping resolution about a mission in Bosnia was before the Council. "The Americans wouldn't let it go forward unless they got an exemption from the ICC, which was an altogether different thing," says Heinbecker.

Having been a member of the Council, Heinbecker said he knew how it worked, so he sent letters, first to all the member countries.

"The Americans didn't like this at all," he recalls. "Nevertheless, we persevered and forced a debate. Sixty-three countries spoke and 62 countries agreed with us."

While the issue still came down to a vote in the Security Council, a compromise was the result. The Americans would not receive an automatic exemption from falling under the jurisdiction of the court, but would have to request an exemption every year. An exemption Heinbecker says they

were subsequently too "embarrassed" to ask for, after it was revealed that US troops and intelligence personnel tortured Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib jail.

Admittedly, the power of the Security Council is such that it can derail what has been accomplished outside of the Council.

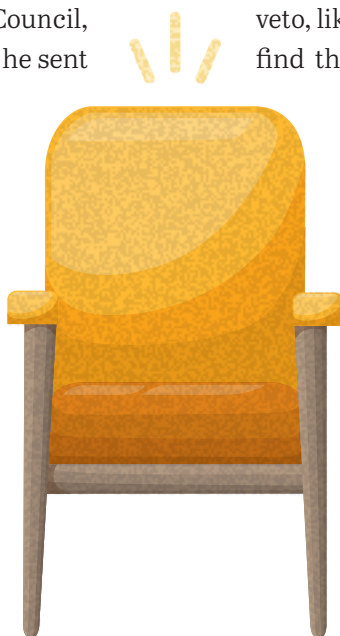
As mentioned above, the RTP was a Canadian UN initiative in response to the UN being unable to intercede in atrocities like the Rwandan genocide because countries claimed the events as being domestic internal affairs, and not subject to international governance. Looking for a solution, Canada instigated the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty that "came up with a formula that said 'that's fine, you're sovereign countries, that's a good thing,' but sovereignty means more than having the rights of a member state. It also means responsibility and the most fundamental responsibility is to protect its population from mass murder, either carried out by the state or by others because the state is unwilling or unable to stop it," explains Rock, who was at the UN between 2004 and 2006.

"If you're not able to manage it yourself, the international community accepts the responsibility of managing it for you and we'll do whatever is required through the Security Council, including, if necessary as a last resort, military intervention to stop the violence and protect the population because you cannot." The RTP concept was debated for a few years before being unanimously adopted in 2005.

"As fine and as admirable as those principles are, when we come up against a Council that has the P5 veto, like in the case of the Myanmar genocide, you'll find that even though we had our RTP principles on the shelf, we can't get at them because there are vetoes that stand in the way," explains Rock.

### CAMPAINING FOR A SEAT AND ADVANCING AGENDAS

In June 2020, it was announced that Canada lost its campaign for a seat on the Security Council. Norway and Ireland won the seats available for the Western European and Others group. Louise Blais, who has served as a diplomat on



## WOMEN DIPLOMATS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The current deputy permanent resident for Canada at the United Nations, Louise Blais, is in a rare position at the United Nations: she's a woman serving as a top-level ambassador.

"The work of a woman diplomat is getting better, and it improves every year, but it continues to pose some challenges," says Blais. "We are still the minority at the UN. We're growing but not at all at the pace you would imagine. We are constantly having to make our marks as women ambassadors. It's that extra step you have to make to develop a productive relationship with a man ambassador. You really have to get inside their bubble and get them to see you as a colleague and make them feel comfortable. I still have to do that."

Blais explained that she is able to deal with these kinds of challenges because she refuses to pass judgment on people's histories or cultures, even if those experiences don't lead them to being comfortable with women.

"You have to say, 'this person has had a different life with different values than my own,' so you just have to admit that and say 'this is how that person sees things.'"

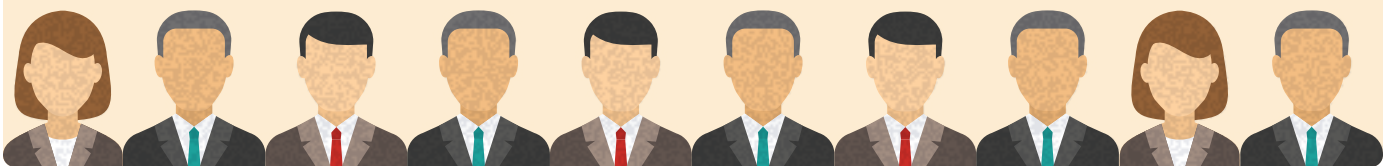
To get inside her male colleagues' (and everybody's for that matter) bubble, Blais takes the approach of

making herself interesting and useful. For her, making herself interesting means making a quick impression during the first couple of minutes of meeting somebody. Often, this takes the form of joking or using self-deprecating humour—all while projecting an air of confidence.

"Once you're useful and interesting, being a woman or being young or being whatever—being not like the person you are speaking with—kind of disappears because now there is a connection that transcends any of their own misgivings or discomfort at being with somebody who is not just like them."

Besides making jokes, Blais said that one technique that works well, and would work especially well for younger people who have to present themselves in a slightly more serious manner, is asking "pertinent and insightful" questions because "when you are asking the questions, you've taken control of the conversation, and that's a different power structure in the conversation, and it's very helpful."

She added that it's important not to appear intimidated, especially as a younger person. "Fake it till you make it goes a long way. That's not to say not to be authentic. You have to be authentic. It's a balance, if you don't come across as authentic, people pick it up."



Canada's behalf for over 25 years, was assigned to New York's UN mission in large part to assist with the election campaign. Ambassador Blais' other official title is deputy permanent representative of Canada to the United Nations. (Former Ontario premier Bob Rae is the current permanent representative. Typically a political appointee holds the permanent title and career diplomats get the deputy designation.)

As part of the campaign, Blais explained that Canada advanced a number of new positions and approaches to international peace and security—ones that involve the Security Council.

"It took two or three years of really hard work, of gestation and education, but we elevated the importance of economic security in the context of peacekeeping and peacebuilding," she explains.

"The UN system and UN members tend to silo the different aspects of society. The economy is not something the Security Council tends to look at, [saying] it's not security. But the fact of the matter is that in conflicts around the world, if you don't take into consideration economic empowerment of the local population conflict erupts. And if you do [take economics into consideration], peacekeeping and peacebuilding can take hold. Because

if people can't eat, ... don't have hope, and... don't work... they fall back into conflict. We see this in places that are very fragile, like Liberia, for example. [However, in places like Sierra Leone] where economic development was at least considered... things are more stable and the path to peace and prosperity just takes a stronger hold."

Blais says Canada advanced this approach by chairing the Peacebuilding Commission. It was founded by the Group of Friends of Financing the Sustainable Development Goals, which is a platform to promote solution-oriented ideas for unlocking finance for development and is led by Canada and Jamaica. The Commission brought in private sector financial and economic development experts to brief the UN. It also organized the first ever meeting of national finance ministers at the UN. A meeting which was followed by what Blais called a "leader-level meeting" led by Prime Minister Trudeau and Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness "to talk about economic development and the importance of debt management for these countries that are triply affected by factors including [conflict], climate change, and now COVID-19."

"Agenda 2030 has shifted the focus away from the Security Council," she says. "Agenda 2030 is a pact that all member states around the world made to improve and eliminate all of the negatives around the world, whether it's environmental degradation, whether it's economic disempowerment, or [poor] governance. Agenda 2030 is basically a way to bring poverty to zero. That's absolutely not easy to do, and COVID-19 has the potential to be a catalyst for accelerated positive change or one to make us lose about 10 to 20 years of progress.... We have to

pull together as world citizens and not just think about ourselves and actually think of the world in totality and try to make the changes we should have been making 10 or 20 years ago."

Still, no matter whether Canada runs again the next time a seat is available, Blais believes the most recent campaign benefitted the country.

"The greatest legacy of this campaign is that we have re-energized our bilateral relations. We have now developed closer ties between our government and the governments of other countries. Until recently, we were very focused on NAFTA and the United States. That's all very understandable, but we've discovered through this campaign that the world is a big place. There are big changes happening geopolitically speaking, and having those kinds of trust-building relationships with the 180 other members... is a very good thing for Canada.... You often hear our Minister [of Foreign Affairs François-Philippe] Champagne say that he now has pretty much the cell phone numbers of most of his counterparts around the world. That came as a result of having to make calls to ask for the vote. There's a lot of goodwill out there for Canada... There's a lot of love for Canada and a lot of respect for what we do inside the UN system."

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CAROLYN GRUSKE is an award-winning reporter and former magazine editor. She often writes about the intersection of business, technology and the law, but she also has a deep interest in educational topics.



President Barack Obama chairs a United Nations Security Council meeting at UN Headquarters in New York, NY, Sep. 24, 2009.



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