

every individual is equal before and under the law

guarantees those rights and freedoms equally to male and female persons

Sikh Boys Prohibited From Playing Soccer While Wearing Turban

has the right to equal participation in all benefits according to the law without exception

Court rules Jehovah's Witness Teen Can't Refuse Blood

everyone has the freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association

Group protests against bringing Sharia Law into Canada

YOU HAVE A VOICE...

The Law Commission of Canada presents the

RODERICK A. MACDONALD CONTEST 2006

TEACHER'S GUIDE

ART, WRITING AND MULTIMEDIA CONTEST

This year's theme is **CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

DEADLINE: April 28th, 2006

CASH AND OTHER GREAT PRIZES FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

Go to: www.lcc.gc.ca



LAW COMMISSION OF CANADA
COMMISSION DU DROIT DU CANADA

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What is the Roderick A. Macdonald Contest?

Sponsored by the Law Commission of Canada, the annual Roderick A. Macdonald Contest encourages young people in their last two years of high school to reflect on legal and social issues affecting Canadians today.

Students can voice their opinions on this year's theme - **Cultural Diversity** - by submitting thought-provoking written, visual or multimedia creations. The best submissions win cash and other prizes, and schools that submit first prize-winning entries will also receive a cash prize. The contest runs from January 9 to April 28, 2006, and winners will be announced in early June.

We hope that you will use this contest and Teacher's Guide in your classroom to stimulate students to think proactively about their role in shaping Canadian law so that it better responds to our country's increasingly diverse population.

About the Law Commission of Canada

Canadian law governs each and every one of us. But are all laws fair, just and accessible to everyone in Canada?

The Law Commission of Canada (LCC) is an independent federal law reform agency dedicated to stimulating new approaches to, and new thoughts about, the laws in our country. The LCC believes that all Canadians should play a role in the ongoing evolution of our legal system. The mission of the LCC is to engage Canadians in the renewal of the law to ensure that it is relevant, responsive, effective, equally accessible to all, and just.

In order to recommend changes to Canadian law we have to think beyond our current legislation. That's why we want to hear the voices of young Canadians - the very people who will be affected by the laws that we make today. This forum offers youth the opportunity to voice their opinions on law and justice, to tell us what needs to be fixed, what's missing and what they think is right. Together, we can work to find a way to create fair, just laws for all Canadians.

We look to today's youth for fresh ideas, opinions and visions. Our success comes through them from law reform suggested by them.

More info: <http://www.lcc.gc.ca/about/strategic-en.asp>

This Year's Theme:

Cultural Diversity

The Roderick A. Macdonald Contest on cultural diversity can be summed up in the following broad question:

How effectively does Canadian law address the changing needs of our multicultural society?

Fast Facts

- Canada is currently home to more than 200 different ethnic groups.
- Canada's history has been shaped by waves of immigrants¹.
- From 1900 to 1960, most immigrants arrived from the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States.
- Today, most immigrants are from Asia and the Middle East, with increasing numbers from Africa.
- More and more Canadians identify themselves as members of faiths such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism and Christian Orthodox.
- Nearly one in five (17%) school-age children living in Toronto and Vancouver immigrated within the past 10 years, as did about 7% of Montréal's school-age children. Many of these children speak a primary language other than French or English.

The facts above clearly indicate that our country's cultural landscape is constantly evolving. Have our laws kept up with the changes?

In the past, Canada's policy approach to immigration and diversity was based on rejection and assimilation of those who were "different" from Anglo-Canadians. Whether dealing with issues related to skin colour, religion, language, or culture, the policies encouraged immigrants to fit in with the existing Canadian society rather than celebrate their own history.

In the early 1970s, the federal government adopted multiculturalism as an official policy. What does the policy do? Based on the premise that all citizens are equal, multiculturalism promotes cultural diversity and encourages respect for, and acceptance of, different identities, beliefs and practices.

Numerous laws and programs have been implemented at all levels of government to promote and safeguard cultural and ethnic diversity. These include:

- the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (and equivalent provincial statutes)
- the *Multiculturalism Act*
- anti-racism programs
- human rights programs

Canada's approach to multiculturalism is based on efforts to include all religious and cultural practices in the Canadian identity, without discrimination.

For example:

- Sikh students carrying kirpans
- RCMP officers wearing turbans
- Muslim women wearing veils

This approach is different from countries with assimilationist policies that seek to suppress difference in favour of a common national identity. But Canada's record is far from perfect and debates continue about approaches to multiculturalism.

Some of those debates revolve around clashes between cultural and religious practices and what many consider core values. These values include individual human rights, equality of all, democracy and the rule of law. Citizens, residents and newcomers in Canada want to embrace difference while also developing and maintaining a sense of cohesiveness in society.

¹ Here, the term "immigrants" refers to all newcomers, including refugees.

What do we do when these goals clash?

- When certain attire can be legally considered a concealed weapon and said to threaten the safety and security of other individuals?
- When religious law that some believe disadvantages women is proposed for family law arbitration?
- When blood transfusions for children are refused on the basis of religion?

Despite our multiculturalism policy, many people continue to face discrimination. In many cases, acceptance of diverse practices comes only after hard-fought legal battles.

- Can our laws be amended to better protect and promote religious and cultural diversity before these legal struggles occur?
- Can we celebrate diversity instead of suppressing it? Why are public institutions and businesses eliminating references to Christmas instead of promoting it along with Hanukkah and Kwanzaa? Is that approach in keeping with Canadian multiculturalism?

Put Your Ideas to Work and Enter

(Teachers, feel free to make copies and distribute to your class)

Using a Canadian legal issue in cultural diversity as your theme, choose a topic that interests you.

This could include an example of a cultural or religious tradition or a specific issue arising within multiculturalism.

Examples:

- The right to wear religious symbols/dress at school/work
- Arranged marriages
- Sharia law
- Religious holidays

Or, it could be a broader look at the theme.

Examples:

- Human rights
- Racism
- International law
- Individual freedoms
- Challenges Canada faces in its effort to be a multicultural country

Ideas to examine:

- What does cultural diversity truly mean?
- How well is Canada meeting its goal of being a multicultural country?
- Should we have the right to practice our cultural and religious beliefs even if these traditions and freedoms infringe on individual human rights?
- What happens when cultural practices are banned?
- How can Canadians create laws that reconcile the tensions and competing interests?

Evaluate perspectives from all sides: Who will be affected? How should they have their say? What do you think would be the best decision? Identify who wouldn't be happy with it; put yourself in their shoes and argue their point of view. What might be a good solution and what process should be used to get there?



Lesson Plans

The Law Commission of Canada's mandate and this year's theme for the Roderick A. Macdonald Contest can easily fit into the daily lessons and discussions that take place in your class. The following are some ideas to help introduce and incorporate the theme of Canadian cultural diversity and the Law Commission of Canada into the curriculum:

Cross-cultural "heritage" interviews: Students will break off into partners to explore each other's unique culture or heritage. Partners ask each other a series of questions, such as: a) What is your cultural background? b) How does your family help you to define your heritage? c) Do your friends help you define your heritage? d) Have you ever felt insecure about your culture or the traditions you observe? e) How has your environment or upbringing influenced your cultural identity? f) What challenges do you believe your culture faces in Canada? Each student then shares with the class what he/she has discovered about his/her partner.

Online Blog: Students can research a particular culture, religion or issue arising within multiculturalism, then write a week's worth of blog entries assuming the character of an individual facing those issues or living within the chosen culture. What is this individual dealing with on a regular basis? How does he/she relate to other cultures, or individuals of other beliefs?

Mosaic: Have each student contribute to a mosaic by creating a piece of art under the theme of cultural diversity. Have them select or create an image that represents multiculturalism, or one that depicts the challenges we as a nation face as we become more culturally diverse.

Awareness Poster or Video Campaign: Students should design a poster or create a 30-second to one-minute video public service announcement that promotes awareness of cultural diversity within their school. These posters/videos must appeal to teenagers so they should be colourful and thought-provoking, and incite action on the part of the student body. In addition, their awareness campaign should include one key fact about cultural diversity. Have students devise a "scheduling" plan, to display the posters around the school, or give times/instances/occasions when their video could be shown.

Research Project: There are times when cultural and religious traditions clash with individual human rights (e.g. debate over the use of Muslim Sharia law in family law arbitration in Ontario and Quebec; the right of a Jehovah's Witness to refuse a blood transfusion). Students should research a specific issue, provide the facts of the situation, and then provide their own opinions with a rationale on how Canada and Canadian laws could help reconcile these tensions and competing interests.

Law Reform Interview:

Laws are subject to the evolving community standards that exist within our society. How does a society go about changing laws, especially as they pertain to our society's diverse cultural practices? What role does the Law Commission of Canada play in making this happen? There are organizations at federal, provincial and territorial levels dedicated to law reform. Interview and profile staff or volunteer members at one of these organizations and write a story on how their actions help shape Canada's cultural laws, or their views on current cultural legislation (i.e. the *Multiculturalism Act* and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*).

Law Commission of Canada

www.lcc.gc.ca

Roderick A. Macdonald Contest archives, past years and entries

www.lcc.gc.ca/macdonald_contest/main-en.asp

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/>

Canadian Heritage www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/

The *Multiculturalism Act* <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-18.7/>

Canadian Ethnic Studies Association <http://www.ucalgary.ca/CESA/>

TEACHERS/STUDENTS: It doesn't stop here! There are more ways to bring the theme into your classroom. We want to hear how you turned the Roderick A. Macdonald Contest and its themes into interactive classroom activities. Please send all suggestions and feedback to: info-rodmacdonald@lcc.gc.ca

Preparing Your Students To Enter The Roderick A. Macdonald Contest

We encourage you to carefully review all eligibility requirements and the rules and regulations to ensure that your students' entries adhere to the guidelines. Visit www.lcc.gc.ca/macdonald_contest/main-en.asp for complete information.

I: Make Sure You're Eligible

You are eligible to enter the contest if you are in your final two years of high school.

II: Choose Your Topic

This year's contest theme: **Cultural Diversity**. Within the framework of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, students are encouraged to choose a topic that interests them. This could include an example of a cultural or religious tradition or a specific issue within multiculturalism.

Examples:

- The right to wear religious symbols/dress at school/work
- Arranged marriages
- Sharia law
- Religious holidays

Or, it could be a broader look at the theme.

Examples:

- Human rights
- Racism
- International law
- Individual freedoms
- Challenges Canada faces in its effort to be a multicultural country

When creating their entry, students should look at the issue from all perspectives. Some things to consider: What importance does this religious or cultural group give to a particular tradition? How does its practice affect the people who partake in it? How does the law perceive it? Are there tensions inherent in acceptance of the practice or beliefs?

Categories

The submission categories are:

- **English Literary** - Essays, diaries, poems, etc.
- **French Literary** - Essays, diaries, poems, etc.
- **Art (English or French)** - Photography, drawings and paintings, sculptures, posters, board games, etc.
- **Multimedia (English or French)** - Videos, electronic games, PowerPoint presentations, web sites, recorded performance art, etc.

There are first, second and third prizes to be awarded in each category.

III: Preparing Your Entry

a) Literary submissions (all)

- On a separate page at the start of your entry, include your name, grade, home address and telephone number. Also, include your teacher's name, and the name, address and telephone number of your school. Please give your entry a title.
 - Your entry must be in MS Word (in a version compatible with MS Office 2003); send an electronic version, if possible, either by e-mail or on a diskette or CD with a label indicating your name, "Roderick A. Macdonald Contest" and title; number the pages; margins on all sides must be no smaller than 1" (2.5cm); use endnotes rather than footnotes, if any; length should be a maximum of 3,000 words.

b) Visual submissions (Video/Audio, Art & Multimedia)

- On a separate page at the start of your entry, include your name, grade, home address and telephone number. Also, include your teacher's name, and the name, address and telephone number of your school. Please give your entry a title.
 - Video: VHS or CD; labelled with name, "Roderick A. Macdonald Contest", title and format; maximum length is 15 minutes.
 - Electronic presentations must be in PowerPoint (in a version compatible with MS Office 2003).
 - Photos: black & white or colour; any size; must be accompanied by caption(s) or quotation(s); can be in any format, including storyboard (large board containing photos and captions that tell a sequential story); maximum number of photos: 24.
 - Visual Art: any medium (e.g. sculpture, painting, drawing or multimedia...); must be accompanied by caption(s) or quotation(s); representational or abstract; maximum number of pieces: 1-10.
 - Poster: black & white or colour; size must be no smaller than 11" x 14" (28cm x 35.5cm) and no larger than 18" x 24" (45cm x 60cm).
- Be sure to include a brief (1-2 paragraph) written rationale describing your work and how it relates to the theme of cultural diversity.
- For questions concerning submissions, please contact info-rodmacdonald.lcc.gc.ca

NOTE: If reporting the views obtained from others, please use fictitious names or first names only. If you cannot conceal the names or identities of people, you must inform them that the Law Commission may publish what they say.

IV: Entering the Contest

Submit your entry electronically, if possible, to rodmacdonald@whatpublications.com or by mail to:

What Publishers Inc.
03-212 Henderson Highway Suite 328
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1L8

Please type "Roderick A. Macdonald Contest" in the subject line of your e-mail or on the envelope.

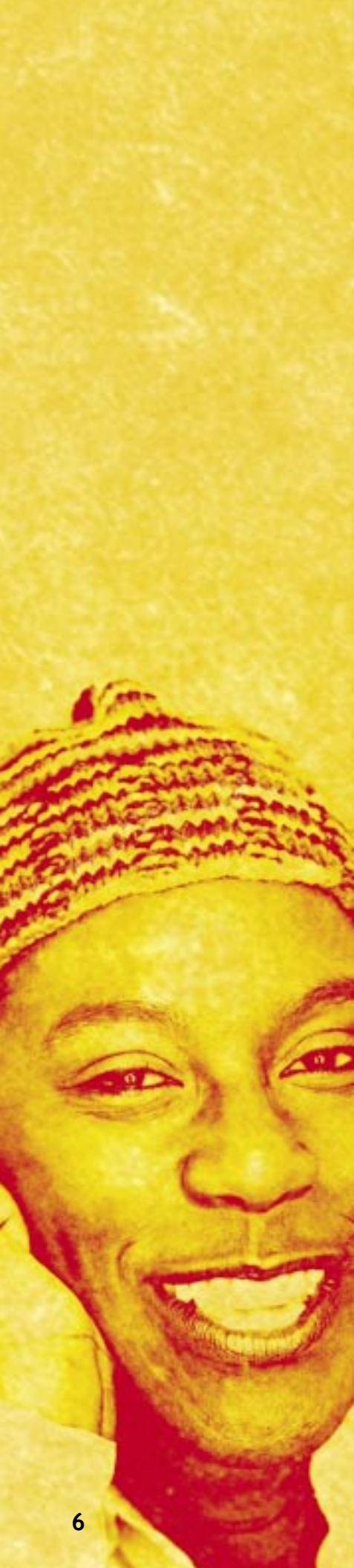
Entries become the property of the Law Commission of Canada and may be used by the Law Commission, in full or in part, on its web site, in its publications, or in any other communications materials. Unfortunately, due to the volume of submissions, the Commission is unable to return them following the contest.

V: Contest running dates/deadlines

The contest begins on **Monday, January 9, 2006**. The deadline for submissions is **5:00 p.m. EST, Friday, April 28, 2006**. Winners will be announced in early June, 2006.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact us at info-rodmacdonald@lcc.gc.ca



Evaluation Criteria

Only those entries that meet the basic criteria outlined in the Contest Rules will be considered valid and eligible for a prize. Members of the selection committee will assign values to each entry based on the following point scale:

Content (60%)

- Entry demonstrates knowledge and awareness of law reform in Canada, related to this year's contest theme of **Cultural Diversity**
- Entry demonstrates an understanding of the issues surrounding cultural diversity
- Entry actively addresses these concerns
- Entry shows credibility in messages and ideas, e.g. originality of thought, scope of research, depth of analysis, relevance to theme, etc.
- Entry demonstrates creativity and is compelling

Technical Merit (40%)

- For Literary Submissions:
 - Presentation of work
 - Structure of writing
 - Spelling and grammar
 - Clarity of expression
- For Artistic Submissions:
 - Presentation of work
 - Quality of production
 - Use of artistic techniques
 - Originality of expression
- For Multimedia Submissions:
 - Presentation of work
 - Quality of production
 - Use of innovative techniques
 - Originality of expression



The Law Commission reserves the right not to award prizes in any category if entries do not meet the criteria to the satisfaction of the selection committee.

Please inform your students of the judging criteria so that they understand how their entries will be evaluated. The selection committee decisions will be final.

Prizes

First Prize in each category: **\$800**
Second Place in each category: **\$500**
Third Place in each category: **\$300**

Plus **\$500** for the first place school in each category

Other great prizes for students and schools, including cell phones, DVD players and MP3 players!



Feedback: Tell Us What You Think!

Teachers: Tell us how you've used these lesson plans in your curriculum. We want to hear from you! info-rodmacdonald@lcc.gc.ca

Or write us:
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