

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS



The (mini) History of Human Rights

- The earliest legal codes imposed laws and punishments that most Canadians today find cruel.
- These laws were meant to insure that societies would survive.
- Concerns about human rights were just not an issue.

Earliest Changes

1 - Magna Carta - England

- 1215 B.C.E - England Dramatic changes – King John Signed the Magna Carta
 - ▣ This limited the Monarchs power – which had been absolute
 - ▣ Gave more rights only to the lords and Barons.

2 – English Bill of Rights

- 400 years later
- Queen Mary the II and King William had to sign the Bill of Rights – 1689 – in order to rule from the throne.
 - ▣ Future monarch had to obey the laws of parliament and allow free elections.
 - ▣ BUT only wealthy land owners and nobles could vote and control parliament

3 -The Enlightenment

- In the 1700s there were many influential thinkers (philosophers) who studied societies, cultures, and governments.
- These philosophers began to promote the human ability to use **reason** to understand and improve the world around them.
- They actively **questioned** long held beliefs and customs and argued for changes. Combined with the advent of modern science and empiricism, humanity was learning more and more about the world and the mysteries of life.

3- The Enlightenment

- Prior to the enlightenment, people only found answers to these questions via superstition or religion.
- It was more common for people to defer to their religious leaders or their absolute rulers, who typically instructed the people to obey tradition.
- The celebration of reason led to a new thirst for knowledge and a feeling of empowerment.
- Increasingly, people questioned the rights of Kings and Queens to hold absolute power, or the idea that some people were more special than others.
- The philosophers of the enlightenment promoted **liberty, fraternity, and equality** as the basis for modern societies.

Events that influenced the creation of the Canadian Bill of Rights

- By the end of the 17th century in the west human beings were thought by many legal and moral thinkers to have NATURAL RIGHTS.
- Such as:
 - ▣ Rights to life, liberty and security
 - ▣ These rights were thought to exist INDEPENDANTLY of any rights and duties created by ruler, government, church or society.

Development of Human Rights Activity

- American Revolution - Bill of Rights *Bonjour*
- French Revolution – Declaration of man and of the Citizen *Kawthyn*
- Abolition of Slavery *Matt Jordan*
- The British North America Act *Tammyn*
- Saskatchewan Bill of Rights – *Healey*
- WWII – UN Declaration of Human Rights *Thyrath & Rosie*
- Referendum on Sovereignty-Association (1980)
Wyns