

Citizenship Education

In British Columbia, high school graduation program requirements include a social studies component. A government consultation program identified the need for more choice in social studies. As a result a draft curriculum entitled Civic Studies 11 has been introduced.

Civic Studies 11 will address topics including elements of democracy and the meaning of democratic citizenship at all levels. The pilot course was undertaken in six BC classrooms during the fall and a pilot provincial exam to match this course will be implemented in January.

The stated rationale for Civic Studies 11, according to government documents, is “to enhance students’ abilities and

willingness to participate actively and responsibly in civic life.”

The goals for the program

include having students learn their responsibilities as members of various communities, learn how to access information on wide-ranging civic issues, to become informed decision-makers on matters of public concern and to be able to assess the impacts of their choices.

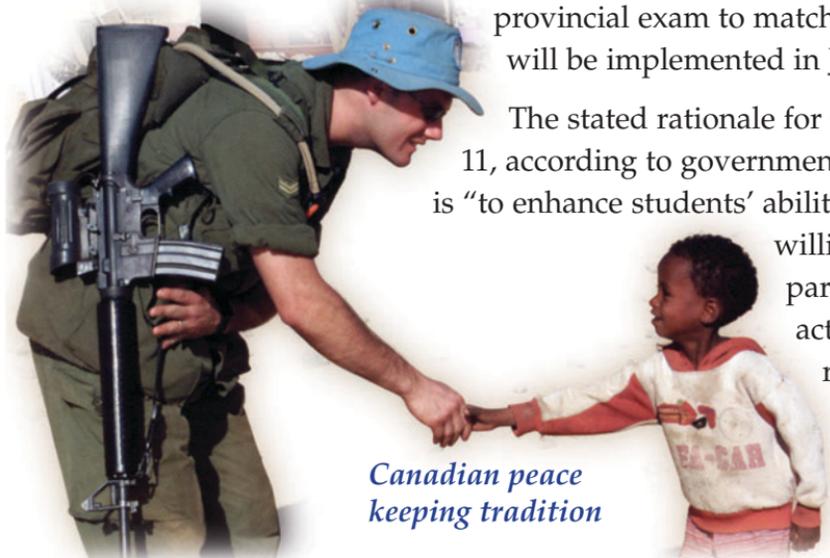
The curriculum proposes a set of prescribed learning outcomes that share a common focus. These include: skills and processes of civic studies, informed citizenship, civic deliberation, and civic action.

Under “informed citizenship” the curriculum states that “Informed citizens are the basis of any democratic society.” As with each of the prescribed learning outcomes, a curriculum organizer under informed citizenship will include topics such as “knowledge of defining events and factors in the Canadian identity covering such topics as culture, language, and the environment.”

Under “civic deliberation”, topics in the curriculum organizer will include the fundamental principles of democracy, the dynamics of power and Canada’s role in international issues.

Civic Studies 11 is a four-credit course, meaning it should have the equivalent of approximately 120 hours of instructional time with the exam component counting for 20 per cent.

Prescribed learning outcomes as articulated by the Ministry of Education are content standards that tell teachers what skills, attitudes,



Canadian peace keeping tradition

and knowledge students are expected to know and be able to do for each subject and grade. For Civics 11, a wide range of outcomes is prescribed.

For “informed citizenship” for example, it will be expected that students will be able to describe the key features of prominent 20th and 21st century political and economic ideologies. Under “civic deliberation”, it will be expected that students can compare Canadian and American forms of federal government, and evaluate the relative powers to affect civic change of individuals, governments, and institutions in Canada and in the world. They will also be expected to be able to create a statement of what it means to be a Canadian citizen.

“**P**owers of individuals, governments,
and institutions in Canada”

As with any provincially approved curriculum, a recommended set of learning resources is proposed. These are resources that have undergone a provincial evaluation process using teacher evaluators. They then earn a Minister’s Order granting them provincial recommended status. These are generally materials from outside the education system which are used to help give the students more focus and relevance in a particular course. When the final package is developed for Civics 11 an official list of approved resources will be appended. In the meantime, in the draft version, a series of resources is proposed from sources as diverse as the Assembly of First Nations, the CBC Archives, NATO, Statistics Canada, and the United Nations.