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## CREDITS

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ELECTION 2019: Canada Goes to the Polls

Video duration – 16:51

The writ was dropped, the election called and the politicians were off. The six-week federal election campaign quickly became a forum for personal attacks and finger-pointing. Scandals plagued the short but intense campaign. While polls suggested the Liberals and Conservatives were neck and neck, it was the Liberals’ race to lose. While they lost seats, they did manage to squeak through with a minority government. The Conservatives took the popular vote, buoyed by Alberta and Saskatchewan – provinces frustrated by a pipeline moratorium. Here is a look at the 2019 campaign.

Related Content on curio.ca

• News in Review, November 2015 – Trudeau’s Surprising Majority
• News in Review, November 2012 – Justin Trudeau: Federal Liberal’s Future?
• Caroline Mulroney the latest Canadian politician to continue family legacy (The National)
• Elizabeth May Interview (The National)
• God Save Justin Trudeau (documentary)
• Justin Trudeau Interview (The National)
• Majority vs. Minority Government (The National)
• O’Leary Bid (Power & Politics)
In a poignant moment from the 2019 federal election campaign, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh was captured in an interaction with a man in Montreal. Singh was wearing a microphone ahead of a television appearance that caught the exchange. The man, perhaps in his late 60s, approached Singh and said, “You should really cut your turban off and you [inaudible] look like a Canadian.” Singh, a proud Sikh and proud Canadian, calmly responded, “I think Canadians look like all sorts of people. That’s the beauty of Canada.” What is striking about the exchange is the kindness of Jagmeet Singh in the face of a comment from someone who clearly does not understand the multicultural nature of Canada.

To see the exchange, go to:

1. What can we learn from Jagmeet Singh’s reaction to the man?
2. What does the exchange say about Canada?
1. Going into the 2019 election, the Liberals were taking credit for giving more money to Canadian families with a bigger child tax credit, updating the NAFTA trade deal, keeping the economy growing, progressing on the path to reconciliation and fighting climate change with a carbon tax across the country.  

   ![True or False]

2. The Liberals managed to deliver on promises made surrounding electoral reform and balancing the federal budget.  

   ![True or False]

3. The biggest scandal to affect Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberals in their first mandate was:

   a) Trudeau’s trip to see the Aga Khan.
   b) Trudeaus’s trade trip to India, where he wore traditional Indian clothing.
   c) The SNC-Lavalin controversy.

4. Conservative leader Andrew Scheer was depicted by his opponents as the “frowning Stephen Harper.”  

   ![True or False]
5. Andrew Scheer personally holds some socially conservative positions, like his opposition to same-sex marriage.  ❑ TRUE or ❑ FALSE

6. The Green Party made breakthroughs leading into the 2019 election, with provincial victories in BC, PEI, New Brunswick and Ontario, for a total of 15 elected legislators.  ❑ TRUE or ❑ FALSE

7. According to People’s Party of Canada leader Stephen Harper, the Conservative Party is “too intellectually and morally corrupt to be reformed.”  ❑ TRUE or ❑ FALSE

8. Which scandal grabbed the most headlines during the 2019 election campaign?
   ❑ a) The Green Party doctored a photo of Elizabeth May holding a paper cup.
   ❑ b) Andrew Scheer’s American citizenship.
   ❑ c) Trudeau’s ‘blackface’ photo.
   ❑ d) No political party vows to repeal Quebec’s controversial Bill 21.
9. Who said, “Mr Trudeau, you are a phoney and you are a fraud and you do not deserve to govern this country”?
   - a) Conservative leader Andrew Scheer
   - b) Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet.
   - c) NDP leader Jagmeet Singh
   - d) Green Party leader Elizabeth May.

10. On election night:
   - a) The Conservatives won with a minority of seats in the House of Commons.
   - b) The Conservatives won with a majority of seats in the House of Commons.
   - c) The Liberals won with a minority of seats in the House of Commons.
   - d) The Liberals won with a majority of seats in the House of Commons.

11. Who said, “And to Canadians in Alberta and Saskatchewan: know that you are an essential part of our great country. I’ve heard your frustration and I want to be there to support you”?
   - a) Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.
   - b) Conservative leader Andrew Scheer.
   - c) NDP leader Jagmeet Singh.
   - d) Green Party leader Elizabeth May.

See Answer Key on page 25.
TALK PROMPTS
TALK PROMPT #1
Consider pausing the video and giving students the opportunity to talk to an elbow partner for a few minutes or use these questions as part of a class discussion.

Pause the video after Rosemary Barton signs off from the first story:
1. What successes and failures did the Trudeau government carry with it into the 2019 election?
2. What challenges did Trudeau’s opponents have going into the campaign?

TALK PROMPT #2
Pause the video after Evan Dyer’s report:
1. What role did political scandal play in the 2019 election?
2. Identify the scandals listed in the video.
3. Which scandal do you think is the most damaging?
TALK PROMPT #3
Pause the video after Katie Simpson’s report:
1. How would you characterize the English leadership debate?
2. Did anyone land any knockout punches?
3. What did you think of the behaviour and rhetoric of Canada’s political leaders?

TALK PROMPT #4
Play the video until the end.
1. Why should Trudeau and the Liberals be worried about their status in Western Canada?
2. What can they do to fix this problem?
AFTER VIEWING

In the aftermath of the 2019 election, a movement started in Alberta called “Wexit.” It draws its name from the Brexit movement in the United Kingdom, where citizens voted to leave the European Union. The Wexit movement is Alberta’s (with some lumping Saskatchewan into this sentiment) way of telling the Trudeau government it needs to take the province’s concerns seriously; namely by helping to mitigate the damage done by the oil patch crash of 2014, and by helping the province that carried the Canadian economy for so many years get back on its feet. Prime Minister Trudeau demonstrated his concern for the situation in the west when he appointed star cabinet minister Chrystia Freeland as his Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. It will be Freeland’s job to tame the angry mood of the west while making the people of Alberta and Saskatchewan feel like they are valued members of the Canadian confederation.
Learn more about Western alienation by reading the following:

- Jen Gerson’s article in Maclean’s magazine, “What can Chrystia Freeland do to help repair the relationship between the west and the federal government in Ottawa?”:  
  www.macleans.ca/news/canada/why-so-many-albertans-are-giving-up-on-their-country/  
- Rosemary Barton’s article on CBC.ca, “Ottawa and the West — it's déjà vu all over again”:  

What can Chrystia Freeland do to help repair the relationship between the West and the federal government in Ottawa?
THE STORY

A close, nasty campaign

There were two things the experts identified going into the 2019 federal election: it was going to be close and it was going to be nasty. From the drawing up of the writ in September to the casting of the final ballot in October, the election did not disappoint on both counts.

The start of an election campaign is often identified as the “dropping of the writ” in the media. This is not really an accurate expression. What really happens is the drawing up of writs for all 338 Canadian ridings. A writ is a formal document giving the returning officer in each electoral district instructions to conduct and administer the upcoming election.
Neck and neck

Out of the gate, pollsters had the Liberals and Conservatives neck and neck — a pattern that persisted for most of the campaign. The Liberal record was number one on the hit list for the opposition. Broken promises and scandals became the battle cry of the Conservatives, the NDP and the Greens. The Liberals fought back, defending their record, pointing to successes like the new trade deal with the U.S. and Mexico, and warning Canadians that a shift to the right and Andrew Scheer’s Conservatives was akin to inviting Ontario Premier Doug Ford (widely unpopular in his province at the time) to take a seat in Ottawa and guide national policy.

Scandals

Almost immediately the pundits predicted that there would be a minority government, but up until election night those in the know said the contest was just too close to call. There were major swings in voter sentiment in a campaign that saw scandal plague the main party leaders:

The expression “neck and neck” refers to a situation that is so close that it is difficult to determine a winner. The saying comes from an image where two horses in a tight race gallop toward the finish line with the heads and necks acting as the reference point for who is in the lead.
Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer faced two particularly challenging situations during the campaign. First, accusations of padding his resume surfaced when attempts were made to verify whether or not Scheer had ever been an insurance broker. While his resume suggested he was a broker, he actually worked for a brokerage firm with a supervisor signing off on all of Scheer’s and other employees’ work. Later in the campaign it was revealed that the Conservative leader was actually a dual citizen of Canada and the United States. While this might not seem like a big deal, critics cited Scheer’s attacks on former Governor General Michaëlle Jean for maintaining her Haitian and Canadian citizenship while she was in office as him holding a disingenuous position.

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau experienced the biggest scandal of all during the election. Early in the campaign, photos of Trudeau wearing “brown face” and “black face” surfaced. Some of the photos were from a private school party where Trudeau had been teaching and another was from a high school talent show. An embarrassed Trudeau faced the press and the nation and admitted his regret at having
repeatedly dressed in this manner. To say nothing of the SNC-Lavalin controversy that came to public attention early in 2019. This debacle cost the prime minister two cabinet ministers and one of his most trusted advisors. It did much damage in public opinion polls and concluded with the Ethics commissioner saying that Trudeau had broken the rules by trying to pressure his former justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould.

A brawl of rhetoric

Ultimately, the scandals distracted voters from the policy positions of the parties. What emerged was a campaign of conflict with each party taking wild strikes at their opponents in what amounted to a brawl of rhetoric. When the election night came, and the results were in, a divided Canada under a Liberal minority government was what the electorate asked for and received. The Conservatives placed a disappointing second despite winning the popular vote. Meanwhile, the NDP lost ground, mainly due to a resurgent Bloc Québécois. The Greens made small gains, going from one to three seats. The controversial People’s Party of Canada, with its focus on what leader Maxime Bernier calls “unsustainable' immigration, was shut out.
Trudeau returns

So Justin Trudeau and the Liberals return to Ottawa to govern a divided parliament and a divided nation. How they will handle deep resentment in Western Canada and regional politics in Quebec will be the primary focus of many observers. While the first four years of the Justin Trudeau era were greeted with hope followed by disappointment, the next four (?) will need to be characterized by cooperation, determination and national unity.

TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you think the 2019 federal election was such a tight race?

2. What problems did the main party leaders encounter over the course of the campaign?

3. What challenges will the minority Liberal government face in the new mandate?
ACTIVITY #1: Trudeau’s post-election speech

Read the following abridged version of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s post-election speech and complete the task that follows.

From coast to coast, tonight, Canadians rejected division and negativity. They rejected cuts and austerity, and they voted in favour of a progressive agenda and strong action on climate change. I have heard you, my friends. You are sending our Liberal team back to work; back to Ottawa with a clear mandate. We will make life more affordable. We will continue to fight climate change. We will get guns off our streets and we will keep investing in Canadians…

To watch Trudeau’s full speech, go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKWyk86yWsQ
And of course, to my fellow Canadians. It has been the greatest honour of my life to serve you for these past four years. And tonight, you’re sending us back to work for you. We take this responsibility seriously and we will work hard for you, for your families and for your future. To those who voted for our party, thank you for putting your trust in our team. Thank you for having faith in us to move this country in the right direction.

And to those who did not vote for us, know that we will work every single day for you. We will govern for everyone. Regardless of how you cast your ballot, ours is a team that will fight for all Canadians.

Dear Quebeckers, I heard your message tonight. You want to continue to go forward with us, but you also want to ensure that the voice of Quebec can be heard even more in Ottawa. And I can tell you that my team and I will be there for you.

And to Canadians in Alberta and Saskatchewan, know that you are an essential part of our great country. I’ve heard your frustration and I want to be there to support you. Let us all work hard to bring our country together.

For four years, we have done everything we could to improve people’s lives. And that is what we will continue to do in the coming years. Friends, you are sending us to Ottawa with a clear mandate. Continue to go forward and to move this country
forward. You asked us to invest in Canadians, to make reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples a priority. To show even greater vision and ambition as we tackle the greatest challenge of our times—climate change. And that is exactly what we will do. We know that there is a lot of work still to be done. But I swear to you that we will continue what we have begun. Because Liberals know, like all Canadians know, that it is always possible to do better…

TO CONSIDER

Maclean’s ran this headline after Trudeau’s win in October 2019: “The saddest victory party in Canada – Inside Montreal’s Palais des congrès, the crowd chanted ‘four more years’, while Justin Trudeau tried to cast the win as the undiluted victory it wasn’t.”

Keeping in mind that Trudeau won a minority government (down 29 seats from the Liberal Party’s 2015 landslide win) and lost the popular vote to the Conservatives, how is his speech a reflection of this headline?

TASK

Take a portion of the speech and write a 250-400 word response to the prime minister. For example, you could take the section on Quebec or Alberta and Saskatchewan and ask the prime minister what he is going to do to help these regions. You could also ask him what he is going to do in the fight against climate change.
ACTIVITY #2: By the numbers

Canada uses the **first-past-the-post** system to elect candidates to parliament. In this system, the candidate that earns the most votes in a riding wins the seat. One of the problems with this kind of system is that people who vote for a losing candidate or party feel like their ballot doesn’t count. Take a look at the data from the 2019 federal election and complete the questions that follow. Go to the CBC’s Canada Votes 2019 site to help you complete these questions. Pay particular attention to the electoral map of Canada. You can get to this site by following this link:
https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/elections/federal/2019/results/

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<td>33.1%</td>
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<td>Conservative</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
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<td>Bloc Québécois</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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<td>People’s Party</td>
<td>0</td>
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**Analysis Questions**

1. a) Who won the election?
   b) Who won the popular vote?
c) How can you explain the discrepancy between who won the election and who had the most votes?

2. How do you explain the fact that the Bloc Québécois outperformed the NDP in terms of seats won despite the fact that the NDP received nearly 1.5 million more votes?

3. How did an independent candidate win a seat despite receiving over 200,000 votes less than the People’s Party of Canada?

Follow Up
Conduct an internet search of these two voting systems:
- Proportional Representation
- Ranked Ballot

Would either of these systems make the Canadian electoral situation fairer?
SOURCES


VIDEO REVIEW – WHILE VIEWING (ANSWER KEY)

1. **True.** Going into the 2019 election, the Liberals were taking credit for giving more money to Canadian families with a bigger child tax credit, updating the NAFTA trade deal, keeping the economy growing, progressing on the path to reconciliation and fighting climate change with a carbon tax across the country.

2. **False.** The Liberals did not deliver on promises made surrounding electoral reform and balancing the federal budget.

3. **c.** The SNC-Lavalin controversy.

4. **False.** Conservative leader Andrew Scheer was depicted by his opponents as the smiling Stephen Harper.

5. **True.** Andrew Scheer personally holds some socially conservative positions, like his opposition to same-sex marriage.

6. **True.** The Green Party made breakthroughs leading into the 2019 election with provincial victories in BC, PEI, New Brunswick and Ontario for a total of 15 elected legislators.
7. **False.** According to People’s Party of Canada leader Maxime Bernier, the Conservative Party is “too intellectually and morally corrupt to be reformed.”

8. c. Trudeau's ‘blackface’ photo.


10. c. The Liberals won with a minority of seats in the House of Commons.

11. a. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.