

International Human Rights Day

History of December 10

On December 10, 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states "*All human beings are born with equal and inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms*" This Declaration holds true more than ever today.

Every year on the same day, the United Nations celebrates the Human Rights Day.

Some thoughts from the United Nations on Human Rights:

You are the guardians of Human Rights – Their fate is in your hands.

On December 10, in every part of the world, men, women and children of all faiths and tongues, of every colour and creed, will gather to embrace our common Human Rights.

Human Rights are what make us human. They are the principles by which we create the sacred home for human dignity.

Who can deny that we all seek lives free of fear, torture and discrimination? Who can deny that we all seek the express ourselves and pursue our aims in life?

The absence of tolerance and human rights is not only a denial of human dignity, it is also the root of the suffering and hatred that breeds political violence and inhibits economic development.

Human Rights are your rights. Seize them. Defend them. Promote them, understand them and insist on them. Nourish and enrich them.

Canada has much to celebrate in the field of Human Rights, but we also know that improvement needs to be made. By highlighting December 10th as a day to celebrate, educate and renew our commitment to human rights, we endeavour to maintain the way of life we value in Canada. Many of the things we take for granted in Canada – the right to express our opinions, to be educated, to receive medical care, to practice our religion of choice, to be treated fairly before the law – are not equally available to all people in Canada and other parts of the world.

Test Your Knowledge of Canadian Human Rights History – True or False?

- 1. Blacks were denied entry into Canada because they were deemed "unfit for Canadian climate"?**
- 2. Before 1969 it was illegal to disseminate birth control pills?**
- 3. Canada imposed a head tax on Chinese immigrants to limit the number gaining entry?**
- 4. As a result of immigration regulations, only 29 East Indians were admitted to Canada between 1909 and 1913?**
- 5. The Human Rights of Canadians are protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?**
- 6. Status Indians were denied the federal vote until 1960?**
- 7. Prior to 1947, South Asian and Chinese Canadians were not allowed to vote federally or provincially.**
- 8. Over 20,000 people of Japanese descent were detained in Camps and had property confiscated during World War II?**
- 9. In the 1950s, the Prime Minister of Barbados was denied a room in a Montreal hotel because he was Black?**
- 10. Canada turned away Jews fleeing Nazism during World War II?**
- 11. Some Universities imposed enrolment quotas on Jewish students?**
- 12. In 1973, Native Band councils gained control over schools on reserves?**
- 13. Restrictions on the employment of married women in the federal public service were moved in 1955?**
- 14. In the 1960's, Canadian airlines could dismiss stewardesses who became pregnant?**
- 15. Before 1967 Canadian immigration laws had restrictions based on ancestry and racial origin.**

(All of the above statements are true!)