

CHC2P Unit 3: 1939-1959: War and Peace

Activity 9: Canada and the United Nations

Overview

In this activity, you will examine the significance of the creation of the United Nations immediately following World War II. This activity will also focus on Canada's involvement in the United Nations since its beginning.

Lesson

The Birth of the United Nations



In 1945, Canada was one of the nations that helped to form the United Nations (U.N.) - an international organization to promote peace and human rights in the world.

The League of Nations of the 1920s and 1930s had not been able to prevent World War II. Many people were confident that the U.N. would succeed, because the United States and other powerful countries were members.

The Cold War often intruded into the work of the United Nations, as the Soviet Union and its supporters argued with the United States and its supporters.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

One of the most important accomplishments of the United Nations was the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The document states that people cannot be discriminated against on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, and politics, and that people have a right to health care, education, and work.

The major author of the Declaration was a Canadian law professor who spent 20 years at the U.N. -- John Peters Humphrey.

Canada and the Korean War

In 1950, Communist-supported North Korea invaded American-supported South Korea. The U.N. condemned the attack and asked member states to assist South Korea.

Canada made the third largest U.N. contribution (the U.S. was first, and Britain second) to the defense of South Korea. With the help of 26,000 Canadian soldiers, the U.N. forces stopped the aggressor from the north and restored the security of South Korea by 1953. Over 400 Canadians lost their lives in the Korean conflict.

Lester Pearson and the Suez Crisis



The United Nations faced another world crisis in 1956 when England, France, and Israel ganged up on Egypt over the issue of who should control the Suez Canal. The Canal was owned by the European countries, but it was in Egyptian territory. The Soviet Union backed Egypt and fighting started.

In the U.N., Canada's Lester Pearson proposed that all troops be withdrawn from the area and that the two warring sides be kept apart by a special U.N. peacekeeping force. This plan was accepted, and Canada provided the largest number of soldiers to the U.N.'s first "peace army."

Since 1956, the U.N.'s blue helmeted peacekeepers have been used in many other parts of the world. For his work, Lester Pearson was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize.

Assignment

1. What is the United Nations?
2. What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
3. Who was the major author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? What was his background?
4. What was Canada's involvement in the Korean War?
5. Why was Lester Pearson awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 1957?
6. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that people cannot be discriminated against on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, and politics, and that people have a right to health care, education, and work. Create a poster that promotes universal human right. Be sure to include a title, slogan and some pictures/graphics.