

CHAPTER 4

To what extent has Canada affirmed collective rights?

affirm: to validate and express commitment to something

collective identity: the shared identity of a group of people, especially because of a common language and culture

collective rights: rights guaranteed to specific groups in Canadian society for historical and constitutional reasons. These groups are: Aboriginal peoples, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples; and Francophones and Anglophones.

Have you ever thought about what makes Canada unique? What makes Canada different than other countries, such as our close neighbour to the south, the United States?

Here's one thing that makes Canada unique: **collective rights**. Collective rights belong to groups of people and are entrenched in Canada's constitution. The purpose of collective rights is to **affirm** the **collective identity** of groups in society and to create a society where people of different identities belong.

Collective rights are part of the dynamic relationship between Canada's government and Canadian citizens. Throughout Canada's history, laws that affect collective rights, and the promises of the government to uphold them, have created opportunities and challenges for Canadians.

This chapter presents some history about collective rights in Canada. As you read, evaluate how effectively laws have affirmed collective rights over time. Consider what implications this history has for Canadian citizens today.

This is the cliff at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in southern Alberta. Aboriginal peoples of the plains — in particular, the Siksika, Kainai and Piikani — used the jump for thousands of years. Aboriginal peoples have a unique place in Canada as the first peoples of this land. How do the collective rights of Aboriginal peoples recognize this?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

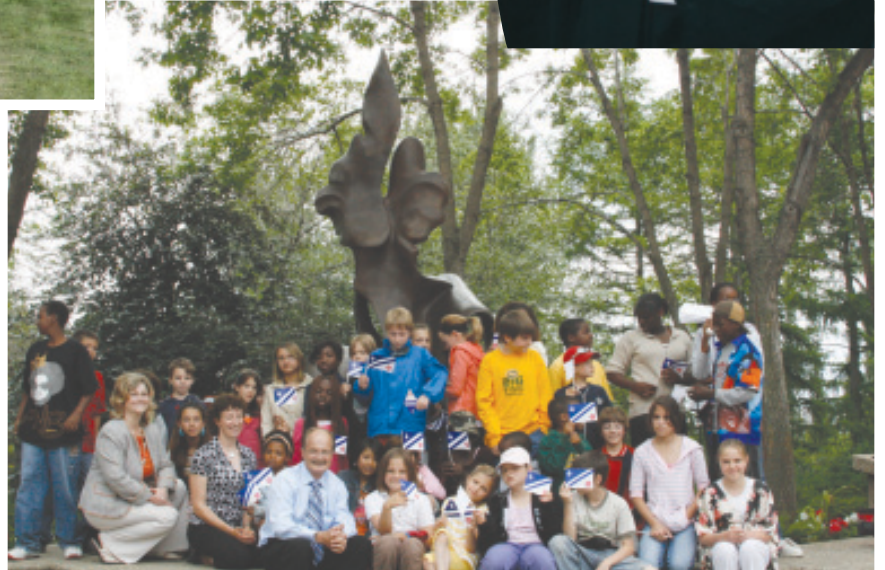
- What laws recognize the collective rights of First Nations peoples?
- What collective rights do official language groups have under the Charter?
- What laws recognize the collective rights of the Métis?

Based on these photographs, what challenges and opportunities do collective rights create for Canada?



This photograph shows celebrations to mark the opening of Métis Crossing in 2005, a historic site near Smoky Lake, Alberta, dedicated to the collective identity of the Métis. This chapter explores the history connected to Métis' identity and collective rights. **Think critically: To what extent is knowing history a responsibility that comes with citizenship?**

Wilma Jacknife is legal counsel for Cold Lake First Nations in Alberta. She works for the recognition of her people's Treaty rights in the economic development of the Cold Lake region — rights set out in Treaty 6, one of the Numbered Treaties Canada negotiated with First Nations in the 1800s. **Think critically: What might Treaties mean for citizenship in Canada today?**



The students in this photo attend Francophone schools in Alberta. They have gathered in front of "L'empreinte francophone" ("The Francophone Imprint"), a sculpture that celebrates the history and identity of Franco-Albertans. The sculpture is on the grounds of the Alberta Legislature. The photo was taken on the day the sculpture was officially unveiled, in June 2007. Chapter 4 explores the collective rights of official language groups in Canada, including the collective rights reflected in Alberta's Francophone schools. **Think critically: In what way do Francophone schools assert the citizenship of Francophones in Canada? How do they affect the responsibilities of all Canadian citizens?**