

7

What does participation involve?

Chapter Focus Questions

- What can participation accomplish?
- How can students draw attention to situations of injustice?
- How can members of a community impact government decision making?

Connecting to Alberta's Government

Connecting to your Local Government

Participating in Representative Democracy

Representative Democracy

Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Ancient Athens

Iroquois Confederacy

The students were curious as Mr. Grundy reached into a brown bag marked "PARTICIPATION." He started pulling out blocks one by one, and stacking them on a table at the front of the class.

"What we are studying is like this," he said, holding up the first two blocks. "Democracy allows people to participate in decision making. We investigated how this worked in ancient Athens and the Iroquois Confederacy — two different models for how people could participate."

He put the two blocks on the table, side by side. He drew out a third block. "This is for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which sets down the rights of citizens to participate, based on ideas and treaties from the past."

A fourth block came out of the bag. "This is for representative democracy, where people participate by electing and communicating with representatives."

Out came more blocks. "Now, here is where Grade 6 students participate. You can connect what you know about representatives to help you take action. You can also participate in your community by drawing attention to injustice."

The stack had two final blocks. "In the end, you will be taking action in local government, and, finally, participating in provincial government." By this time, all the blocks were out of the bag. "Democratic participation is like this tower of blocks," he concluded. "It has a foundation in ideas that date back a long, long way."

Pause

How does participation, and helping others, build a society where we all belong?

What are we learning in this chapter?

This chapter explores ways that people can participate in helping their communities. A number of Grade 6 role models are highlighted, showing why they chose to take action, what they accomplished and how they influenced others. This chapter also explores different ways of influencing government decision making.

Why are we learning this?

In Chapter 5, we learned about the rights and freedoms we have as Canadian citizens. Active citizenship means balancing those rights and freedoms with responsibilities. Being an active citizen gives you an opportunity to make a difference in the world.

There are many areas in which Grade 6 students can participate. Students can use their talents and decision-making abilities in a variety of places, such as schools, interest clubs, sports organizations or volunteer groups. Active citizenship is very important. By volunteering in their communities, drawing attention to injustice or by being **role models** for others, students can be part of solutions to problems and challenges facing their communities.

These students have chosen to be active citizens.



Chapter 7 Inquiry Task

SKILLS at Work

Get ready to make a difference! As you work on this task, check the Skills Centre for ways to work on issues with others.

- work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal
- draw attention to situations of injustice where action is needed



Drawing attention to situations of injustice, where action is needed

Introduction

Injustice means a lack of fairness. In this chapter, you will see many examples of **injustice** where Grade 6 students have identified problems and decided to take action.

What action could your class take? Your class has the chance to support an organization that helps correct injustices. However, before your class can choose which organization to support, each student needs to: select an injustice, research an organization that helps correct it, and present the information to your classmates. Your class will then vote on which organization to support.

The task

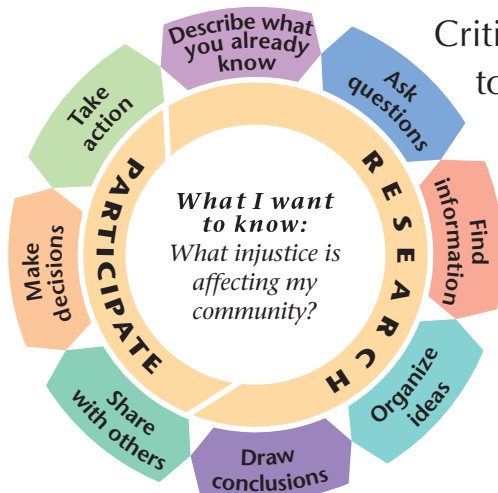
Part 1: Researching

Your first job is to choose a situation of injustice that is affecting the well-being of your local community. To assess the extent of the problem, you need to collect data or information that will help identify the situation.

Part 2: Critically evaluating the problem

Critically look at your data to determine the answers to:

- Who or what is being affected?
- When or where is the injustice happening?
- Why might this be happening?
- Why is it important to correct this injustice?



Part 3: Critically evaluating organizations

Find out what organization(s) are trying to correct the problem. Critically evaluate what the organization(s) are doing, and present the results of this inquiry to your classmates.

Part 4: Participating

As a class, select an organization to support and determine how you could best assist in correcting the injustice. For example, you might decide to hold a silent auction to raise funds to donate to the organization, or your class might volunteer some time to assist the organization.

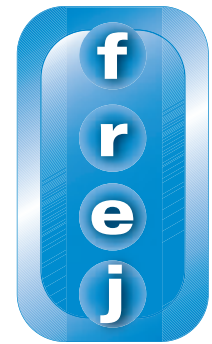
Part 5: Evaluating

Complete a self-evaluation, giving specific examples about: a) yourself as a contributor, and b) the contribution of the whole group. Use your personal guideline for participating in groups from Chapter 1 to help you complete this self-evaluation.

Things to think about before starting the task

- identifying a situation of injustice
- identifying who or what that situation affects
- working out a plan of action that will help solve the problem

Sharn, Ivan and Eric have volunteered to collect and deliver food to their local **food bank**. What will you and your classmates choose to do? How will your personal guideline on participating in groups help you work together?



What can participation accomplish?

SKILLS at Work

Who is working with 4-H members to recycle tires? Make a mind map. How could this example help you take action on an issue?

- work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal



What's important?

Discover how participation can mutually benefit a group and a community.

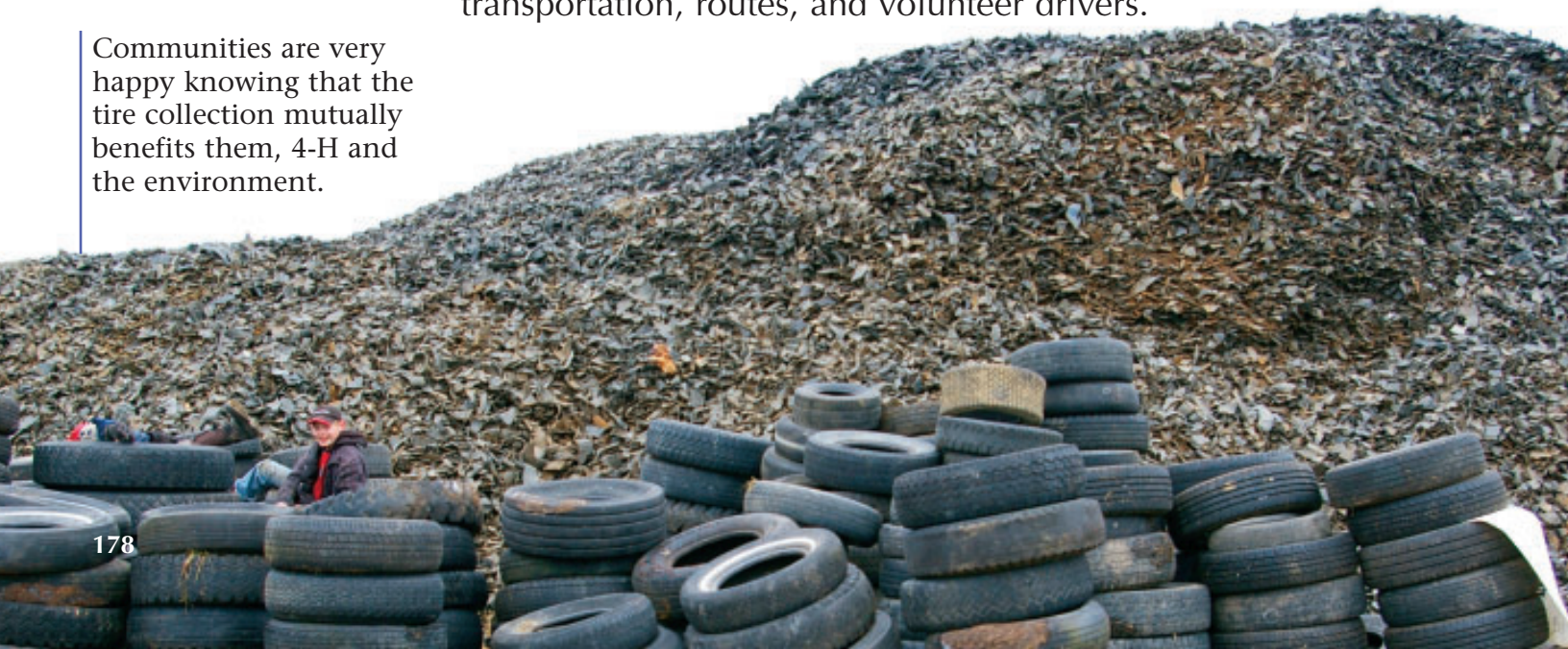
Choosing to Participate

Have you ever gone past a property with leaning stacks of old tires? Have you ever walked on rubber cobblestones, or played at a playground whose ground is covered by a black springy mat? Are these two connected? They are — and the connection is made possible by 4-H club members, many of whom are your age!

Keeping old tires out of landfills and putting them into recycling programs is important to the environment. Farm equipment uses cumbersome, heavy tires, which are often hard to get to recycling depots because of distances or inconvenience. Alberta 4-H clubs have an opportunity to participate in a roundup of scrap tires from farms and private residences in the spring and fall. The collection also benefits local clubs, which make a profit on each tire.

Any local 4-H club can hold a vote and decide to participate in a 4-H Tire Roundup. Every year thousands of people phone 4-H requesting tire pick-ups. 4-H members are responsible for filling in collection forms and arranging transportation, routes, and volunteer drivers.

Communities are very happy knowing that the tire collection mutually benefits them, 4-H and the environment.



What's important?

Discover how volunteering can play an important role in helping the environment.

Many Happy Returns

Alberta's tire recycling program has been going since 1992. Since that time, more than 35 million tires have been saved from landfills. Tires are now being made into products such as surfaces for playgrounds, rubber roofing and deck products, and feed and water troughs. These recycled products are now being **exported** around the world. Have you seen other places where recycled tire products are being used? Keep your eyes open because recycled tires are increasingly used in innovative ways.

Statistics

During the fall 2007 Tire Roundup, 30 4-H clubs participated. They collected 27 498 passenger tires, 1738 medium truck tires, and 1888 tractor tires, which earned \$46 872. Five additional clubs that collected an amazing additional 20 000 tires are waiting to have their tires picked up and their profits tallied!

These members of Rimbey 4-H club have just taken their tires to be chipped.



SKILLS at Work

As you read about Alex Brown, think about how he drew attention to a situation of injustice. What steps did he take? How did he communicate his concern?

- draw attention to situations of injustice where action is needed



What's important?

Recognize that individuals can identify injustice and take action.

Grade 6 Can Participate!

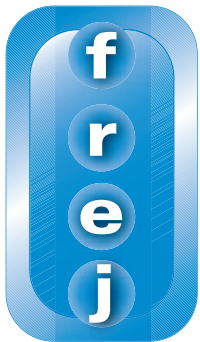
Working to improve the environment is certainly something Grade 6 students can participate in.

Individuals, including Grade 6 students, can also make a huge difference in the lives of people in need, by drawing attention to situations of injustice where action is needed.

Sometimes members of society don't or can't have their needs represented, for a variety of reasons. Sometimes these needs have to do with life itself.

The Power of One

You met Alex Brown in Chapter 1 on page 19. Alex is a Grade 6 student who lives in Calgary. One cold morning, he was out walking his dog Buddy. When he returned to his warm home, Alex heard a news story about a homeless man dying from the cold. "What can I do to help?" he wondered. "Homelessness is a very large problem in Calgary."



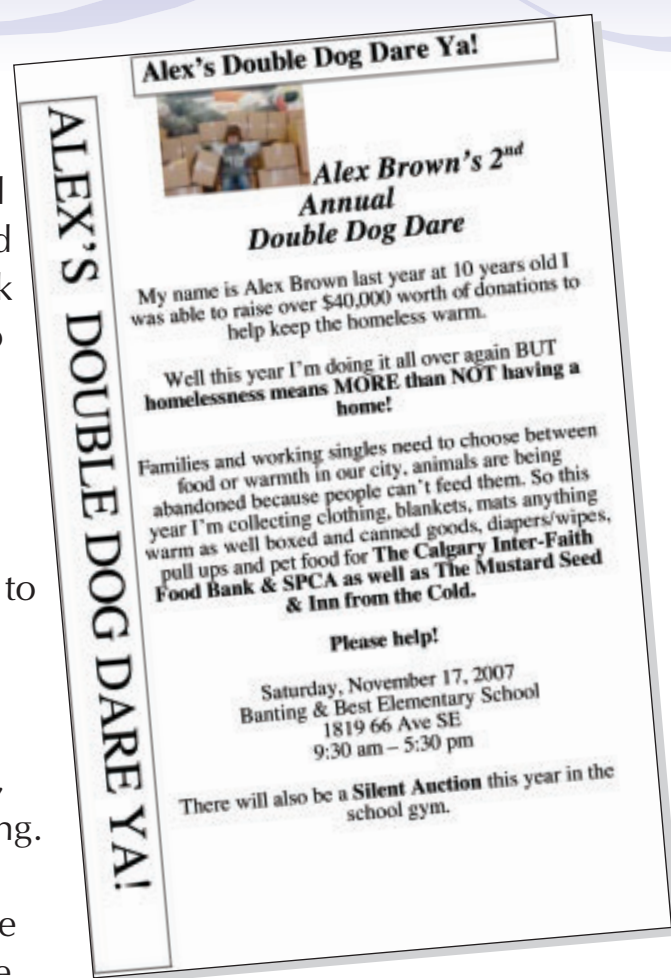
Alex discovered an injustice when he listened to the news on the radio. The news made him think about things he had that other people did not.



Alex decided to organize a clothing drive for the homeless. He 'double dog dared' people to donate sleeping bags, blankets and clothing, and he created flyers to post around the city. The public started to notice the work that Alex was doing. He had opportunities to go on the radio and was interviewed on television, where Alex was called "The Conscience of Calgary."

Businesses became involved and two firms sent out a corporate challenge to other firms to match or beat their donations. One firm donated over \$36 000 in new children's clothing including snow jackets and pants. Alex's school, Sherwood Community School, placed large containers in the gym for clothing. A local company donated the use of a truck. Items were put into the truck and taken to the Mustard Seed, an agency that helps distribute items to those most in need.

Alex's work continues to grow because he believes that he should "speak for those who can't speak for themselves."



This is Alex receiving a Great Kids Award from Albertas government. Alex shows that one individual has the power to highlight injustice by recognizing a need and actively helping to answer it.



What's important?

Recognize that a role model can inspire groups to take action

The Ladybug Connection

Sometimes individuals can act as role models, and influence groups to continue an endeavour. A student from École Greenview School in Edmonton went to hear Hannah Taylor speak at a local luncheon. Hannah is a Grade 6 student from Winnipeg.



Hannah Taylor has spent years taking action about Canadian hunger and homelessness. The most important thing that Hannah does is being an advocate, or a person who speaks to support the rights of others. She has spoken to individual people and to groups as large as sixteen thousand. She has talked to businesses, schools, and the government in Ottawa.

When Hannah was five, she witnessed a man eating out of a garbage can. For a year, she learned as much as she could about hunger and homelessness in Canada. Hannah started making collection jars for spare change, which she decorated with ladybug motifs. She talked to her Grade 1 class, believing that they would want to help.

This is Hannah and Rick. Rick was a homeless person Hannah met in Winnipeg. “When I met him, he cried,” Hannah says. “He said they were happy tears. He is just like you and me — he just needs someone to care about him. We all have so much, we just need to share a little of what we have and care about each other always.” Because of Hannah’s love and care, Rick now has a job and a home.

Since Grade 1, she has raised more than a million dollars, most of which has come from speaking engagements. When Hannah was little, she used to believe that if she gave stuff away she would have less, but what she has learned through her work is that when you give from your heart, you get so much more back.

SKILLS at Work

A census is an official population count. In 2006, a census in Calgary established that there were 3436 homeless people living in the city. In Edmonton, the 2006 figure was 2618 homeless people. How could you research up-to-date information about homeless people in your area? Describe how you would use the Internet to help you.

- access and retrieve appropriate information from the Internet



Hope Mission in Edmonton shelters and cares for more than 700 homeless people every day. On the next page, see how Hope Mission has been helped by kids.

Continuing the Work as a Group

École Greenview School students decided to support the homeless following the example of Hannah. Each class elected a representative to be on the Student Leadership Team. This group meets once a month and they make decisions about how to support the Ladybug Foundation.

Helping the Homeless

We've been given great ideas about helping the homeless by the Ladybug Foundation's founder Hannah Taylor. She told our school about the needs of people who don't have homes, good food or people to care for them. This year we've had a one day bottle drive and we've collected change in ladybug jars. Some of our parents came in to count the money and roll it. In just over three months we've collected enough to provide over 1000 meals, and we've also collected new teddies for kids in shelters. Together we can change the lives of people, penny by penny and kid by kid!



Students drew dinner plates to represent some of the many dinners they provided for people at Hope Mission and the Youth Emergency Shelter.

Think About the Task

To complete the inquiry in this chapter, your class needs to choose an organization in your community to support. There are many ways to offer support. How has the Ladybug Foundation inspired the students at École Greenview School? What ideas do you get from their example?

What's important?

Know when an issue needs action.

Identifying the Issue

When the class was settled in their desks, Mr Grundy began.

"Toba just asked about what was happening with the Wildrose Community Association. Remember the problem about getting enough ice time at the arena? Despite having extra ice time, our committee is still getting many unhappy e-mails and phone calls. One person worked out that other communities have at least double the ice time we have, which he said was unfair. The Tai Chi club and the new parents asked if I'd found them a place to meet, and I had to tell them I can't find space."

He suddenly stopped talking and paused. "Do you know the word that I dislike the most?" The class certainly did. Answering in one voice, the class replied, "CAN'T!" Mr. Grundy laughed. "You've got that right. The rest of the committee feels the same way. We've decided that we CAN do something about the issue. We are going to be active and have an open house. We'll be asking our community for solutions. We don't know what the best solution will be, but we know that we CAN find it!"



Pause

What is the issue here? Is it an example of injustice?

A man with a goatee, wearing a green shirt and a patterned tie, stands to the left of a whiteboard. He is holding a blue marker. The whiteboard has the word "CAN" written in large, bold, red, hand-drawn letters. The background is a light blue and purple pattern.

CAN

What's important?

Know how to organize a public meeting.

Organizing a Public Meeting

Later that morning, Mr. Grundy picked up his story. "At our last committee meeting, we decided we should find out what ideas the community has for solving the continuing recreation problems. So, we booked a room at the local library for an open house **public meeting** that anybody interested could attend."

He went on. "It was important to let as many people as possible know about the open house. Our vice-president wrote a letter and made posters with all the information. He included the purpose of the meeting, the time and place. For those who wanted input but couldn't make the meeting, he also included contact information. He e-mailed everybody who was interested and asked them to share the letter, to reach as many Wildrose people as possible.

"We also put a notice about the meeting into the local newspapers. Some of our committee took posters and put them in the local stores, the library, and on community notice boards. Another committee member phoned local schools, churches and interest groups and asked them to include the notice in their newsletters. Our group's secretary arranged for the room set-up and the microphone, and another member volunteered to provide hot chocolate and doughnuts. Tonight is the open house. I'll let you know what happens."

Wildrose Open House - March 20, Lakeview Library Committee Room, 7:00pm

- Set-up room by 6:30 (chairs, table, microphone) Bob L, Sheila*
- Write & send e-mail letter to those who attended first meeting - Mike*
- Make 15 posters with open house information - Mike*
- Put a notice in the paper - Mike for Wed. paper*
- Distribute posters - S.G., Claudette, Rob*
- Phone local schools/churches - Bob R, Sheila*
- Provide/set-out hot chocolate, doughnuts, cups, napkins - S.G./Bob L.*

Pause

What's the difference between a committee meeting and a public or open house meeting?

What's important?

Know the procedure for a local public meeting.

Holding a Public Meeting

The next morning, after taking the attendance, Mr. Grundy smiled. "Last night was our open house. The turnout was astounding. There were people of all ages and some entire families. We didn't have enough chairs and some people were left standing. At 7:00, I started by welcoming those who came and introducing the committee. Then I explained that we were trying to collect ideas about how to meet the recreational needs of the Wildrose Community. Our vice-president passed around a sign-up sheet where people wrote their names and contact numbers so we could give them further information."

"A number of people said they wanted to speak. We had a microphone at the front so that everybody could hear what was being said. At one time, I counted seven people in line waiting their turn. Our secretary had her laptop and she was busy writing down all the comments. One boy who was your age talked about how hard it was to improve his hockey skills because his community team couldn't get practice times. He suggested that the community could build an outdoor rink. Other ideas included lobbying for an extension on the current ice arena, while others wanted a new recreation complex to be built in Wildrose. Lots of ideas." He paused.

Melissa had a question. "Mr. Grundy, what's going to happen next?"

Mr. Grundy shrugged. "Honestly, I'm not sure. Our committee will continue to collect people's ideas and then we will sit down and analyze what we have. Our progress is just one step at a time."



What communication skills are important at a public meeting? How could you put your personal guideline for participating in groups to use?

How can students draw attention to situations of injustice?

Letting people know what is going on is very important. Both Hannah Taylor and Alex Brown made the public more knowledgeable about homelessness, through public speaking, and collecting money and items. Groups such as the students at École Greenview School and the 4-H club members also made others aware of issues and took action. Problems have different solutions, and a student can take action simply by drawing attention to an injustice needing action.

Identifying the Issue

Amethyst lives in Strathcona County, which has a transit system, including special buses with wheelchair lifts for people with disabilities. Amethyst has family and friends in need of these services. However, the system restricted who could use the buses and how, and when the service could be used. This bothered Amethyst and others.

The accessible transport service could only take people living in Strathcona County to the city if they were going for medical appointments, and was only available Monday to Friday. This meant that people with disabilities in Strathcona County couldn't use the system to travel to the city for social reasons or on weekends. If her uncle, who needed accessible transport, wanted to visit Amethyst or other family members, he had to rely on them for a ride, or take expensive medical taxis.

Pause

What could be other reasons that transit services would be limited?

How does transport for people with disabilities show fairness and equity?



What's important?

Know how to communicate with contact people.

An Opportunity

The following notice appeared in Amethyst's local newspaper.

Accessible Transportation

Review of Services

Public open house Thursday, March 15

The county is starting on a review of its accessible transportation services. The review will determine how these services can better meet the needs of citizens.

An important part of the review is meeting with people in the community. We need your input to create the best service possible. You are invited to attend a public open house on:

Thursday, March 15

5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

County Hall, 100 Main Street

We hope you can attend this public open house. If you cannot, you can send us your comments:

- by e-mail
- by fax
- by mail

We look forward to your participation in this very important forum.



Transit for Everyone
Accessible Transportation

What's the purpose of the open house? What changes to transit services would have helped my uncle? If I can't go to the open house what else can I do?



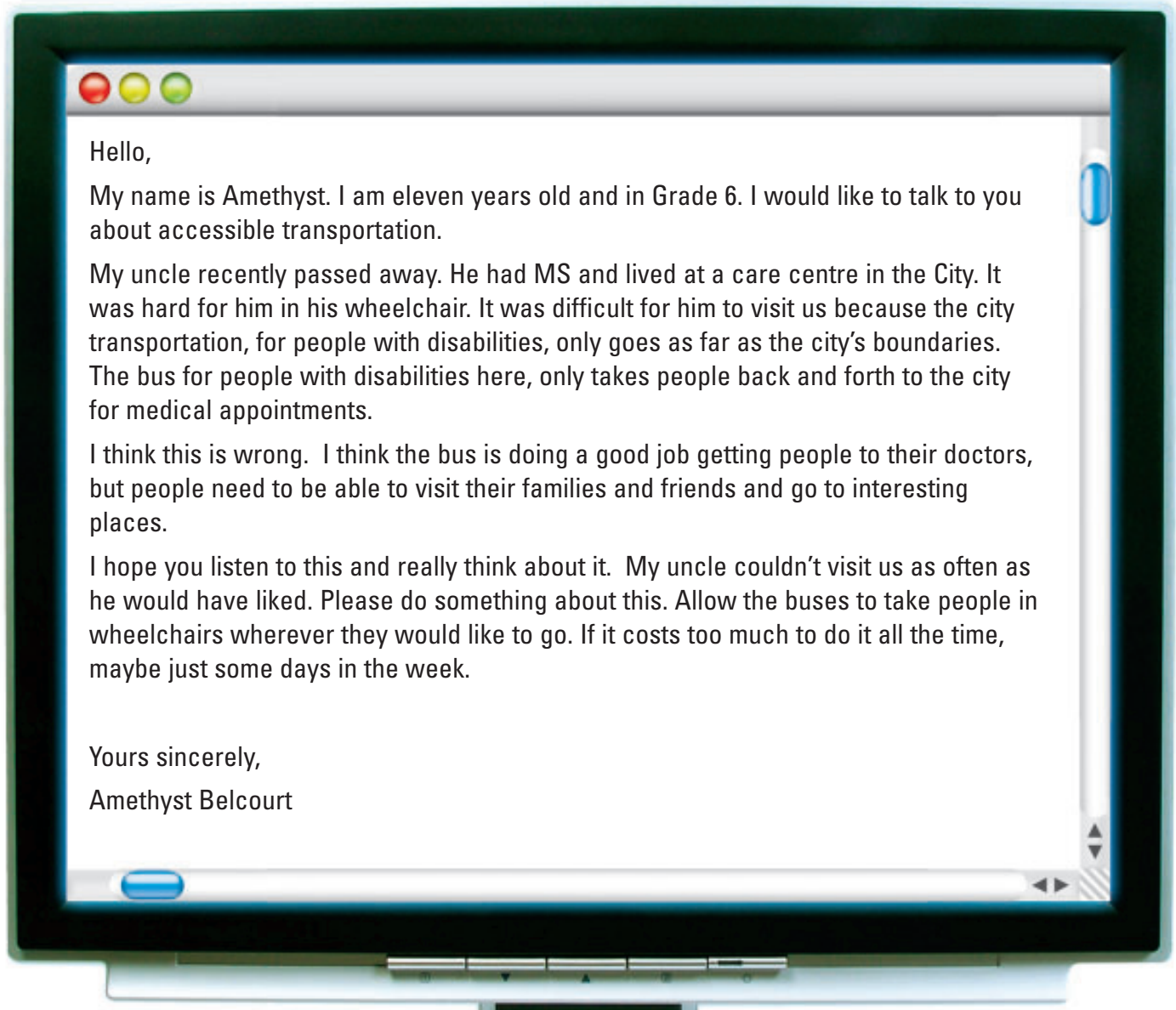
Pause

Why is it important to know different ways to communicate with officials on an issue?

Taking Action by Being an Advocate

Part of the job of an **advocate** is to present the perspectives of others, or plead their case. Because of her uncle, Amethyst knew the difficulty many people with disabilities have to arrange visits to family and friends. She wanted to present their needs and suggest solutions on their behalf.

Amethyst knew that local governments often can't do what is asked. Sometimes the cost is too great. Sometimes there are other problems, such as insurance. However, Amethyst believed that she could make a difference, even by writing one e-mail and being an advocate. She could make others aware of issues and possible solutions.



How can members of a community impact decision making?

What's important?

Discover the steps to creating an effective petition.

The Next Steps

It had been a week or two since Mr. Grundy had talked about the Wildrose group.

"Mr. Grundy," said Emaeth. "It feels like ages since you mentioned the Wildrose recreation problems you've been dealing with. Remember you promised to keep us in the picture?"

Mr. Grundy struck his forehead with the palm of his hand. "Sorry, Emaeth, but I'll take care of that little problem right now." He hopped up on his teaching stool.

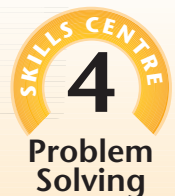
"Do you remember there was a boy who suggested we have an outdoor rink? Well, he called me and asked what had to happen to get an outdoor rink built. I explained that the community would have to support the idea, and that the county would have to allocate land and grant planning permission for it.

"The next evening, he called me again, — and he called all the other representatives of the community association, too. He and his dad wanted to meet with us. It was about a **petition** for an outdoor rink, he said. So, we had a meeting.

SKILLS at Work

In the story, on this page and the next, Mr. Grundy describes steps for developing a petition, starting with a phone call. What steps can you identify in the story? Which step is most important, in your opinion? Compare your conclusions with a friend. Why are your conclusions similar or different?

- propose and apply new ideas, strategies and options, supported with facts and reasons, to contribute to decision making and problem solving



"The boy and his dad explained that if they got enough people to sign their petition, it would demonstrate community support for an outdoor rink. Then, they suggested, all of us could take the petition to the County. It took us about five minutes to agree to their plan. That must have been the shortest committee meeting on record!

"Talk about speedy action! By the next day, the boy had a petition form designed, copied and in the hands of every player on his hockey team!" Mr. Grundy explained that the team talked over what to say when asking for signatures. They discussed why they wanted an outdoor rink, and identified their main points:

- Their team had only one hour to practise each week. Teams from other communities had at least two hours of practice each week.
- An outdoor rink would be fast to build, so it would solve the problem of ice time more quickly than any other solution.

They agreed to make these points as a way to persuade people to sign the petition.

"The petition asks that the county consider allocating land for an outdoor rink and shack in the Wildrose area. The players are asking everybody in the area to sign the petition. Some of the team have even set up a schedule to stand in the local mall and ask for signatures."

Mr. Grundy laughed. "Can you guess how many times I've been asked to sign the petition at last count?" He held up seven fingers. "I can only sign once, but I've persuaded my neighbours to sign. My wife has signed, too. I have a vision of skating on that rink in a year's time with her and my daughter!"



Why is it important to present evidence as part of preparing a petition?

We, the undersigned, have concerns about the lack of adequate recreation facilities in the Wildrose area. We request that the county consider the following:

- a) allocating land in the Wildrose area for an outdoor skating rink
- b) providing planning permission for an outdoor rink and shack to be built.

Name (Printed)	Address	Signature
FRANK REED	89 WILDROSE WAY	<i>Frank Reed</i>
Helen Reed	89 Wildrose way	<i>H.M. Reed</i>
Myra Stantor	149 Wildrose Way	<i>Myra Stantor</i>
Julia Kusevich	Apt. 389 24 Wilderness Walk	<i>Julia Kusevich</i>

Petitions always collect information about the people who sign. What information does this petition collect? Why do you think the information is important?



Why should Grade 6 students become involved in issues, such as building recreation facilities? How can they influence decisions about what to build?

Participating Practicalities

There are a variety of ways that individuals, groups and associations can participate in the decision-making process regarding current events. In what ways were people in Mr. Grundy's community participating? How many of the methods listed below did you encounter in this chapter?

Lobbying	Participating in an organized attempt to influence people in government about a particular interest, or attempting to persuade a politician to support or oppose changes in the law.
Petitioning	Submitting a formal written request, signed by many people, appealing to authorities on behalf of a cause.
Meetings	Organizing or attending a meeting of people, especially members of a group, society or committee for the purposes of discussion.
Organizing or attending rallies	Organizing or attending a mass meeting of supporters or persons having a common interest, to show support for a cause, or to take concentrated action.
Contacting elected representatives	Phoning, e-mailing or meeting elected representatives to impact decision making.

Pause

How do these ways of participating:

- connect to the principles of democracy: freedoms, representation, equity, justice? (Hint: Think of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms)
- make representative democracy function effectively?

Review! Review!

1. What can participation accomplish?

Make a list of projects that grade 6 students have undertaken to help their community. Use text examples, and local examples. Discuss how these connect to fairness and equity.

2. How can students draw attention to situations of injustice?

Use a graphic organizer (mind mapping/webbing, flow charting or outlining) to construct a model showing how students can draw attention to injustice. (Note: this will be added to in the next two chapters.)

3. How can members of a community impact government decision making?

Choose a local issue that affects you, where government action is needed.

Make a poster, or develop a series of freeze frame theatre skits to show taking action through: petitioning, organizing and attending local meetings, and contacting elected representatives.

freedoms

representation

equity

justice

