



**APATHY
IS BORING.™**

Connect, Educate
and Activate.

DEMOCRACY FRAMEWORK

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Created May 2022

INTRODUCTION:

Upon deep introspection about our mission to “support and educate youth to be active and contributing citizens in democracy,” Apathy is Boring has decided to develop a Democracy Framework, to clearly define what we mean by **democracy**.

As an organization, we’ve faced tremendous social and organizational changes in the past two years and this framework will bring clarity to our path and intervention strategies, moving forward. Think of this as a guide to help us ensure that our non-partisan stance no longer conflicts with our mission, our principles, but most importantly – our definition of what democracy means to *us*, acknowledging there are many differing perspectives on democracy that are rooted in place and identity.

Our Democracy Framework is a skeleton. **The intention of this document is to create a foundation to explore and consider where our work contributes (or could contribute) to building a better democracy for young people in Canada.**

Our goal is to create alignment internally around a positive vision for democracy while also providing the foundation to name and acknowledge the current deficits and problems that exist and support the development of solutions.

This framework is not a how-to guide but rather, its main purpose is to point out where the work needs to be done. How the work is to be done is outlined elsewhere in our framework for Youth-Led Democratic Innovation, with youth acting as makers, shakers, and uptakers. This framework will guide interdepartmental reflection, conversation, collaboration and decision-making moving forward.



This framework will not only lay out key pillars that support a strong and healthy democracy, but will also allow consistent alignment between all departmental initiatives, outreach efforts, and communications. Our hope is that this framework will serve as a trailblazing document for external organizations, individuals, and groups to use as a resource, and an inspiration. We’d like to thank Rebekah Elkerton, Sabreena Delhon, David Garrow, Shadi Hafez, Fama Tounkara, the entire AisB Staff and Board of Directors for their feedback and support in this process.

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DEMOCRACY FRAMEWORK:

Democracy does not consist of a single, unique set of institutions that are universally applicable. The form that democracy takes in a country is determined by political, social, and economic circumstances. Democracy is not a strictly Western-colonial creation. Prior to colonization, many Indigenous Peoples in Canada had democratic forms of governance. For example, the Iroquoian Confederacy (now known as the Haudenasee) followed a functioning constitution called Kaienere'kó:wa or the Great Law of Peace, a democratic document that shows (in the form of a wampum belt) that everyone has a voice and laws are created based on substantial agreement and consensus decision making.¹

There are various influences affecting democracy including historical, traditional, and cultural factors. Broadly, it is a system of government in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or through freely elected representatives.

Canada's system of government is a constitutional monarchy. This is made up of three distinct branches: the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. Each branch is meant to play a role in sustaining democracy by defining and enforcing the rule of law that applies equally to everyone regardless of occupation, sexual orientation, level of wealth, race, colour, or gender.

The Charter of Rights and Freedom is defined by the principle that all people are treated equally under the same standards, and the requirement that our courts follow the Rule of Law is a fundamental principle of Canada's democracy. However, we recognize that legislation under the Charter relating to Indigenous communities continues to be inequitable & predominantly harmful. Canadian democracy continues to be impacted by our own history of colonialism, imperialism, and slavery. This legacy is embedded in our democratic, social, and cultural institutions, preventing us from having a thriving and robust democracy for all.

These documents are imperfect. It is our belief that through a democratic process the Canadian public should be able to shape and amend documents pertaining to rights within the nation. People should have the opportunity to shape these documents and our institutions. We, as an organization, are working towards building a democracy that does meet these requirements. In other words, if all of these conditions are satisfied, then it would create a decentralized system of accountability.

1. Horn-Miller (2013). "What does Indigenous Participatory Democracy look like?" Review of Constitutional Studies. 18(1). Online: https://www.constitutionalstudies.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/05_Horn-Miller-1-1.pdf

KEY PILLARS THAT SUPPORT DEMOCRACY

As a non-partisan, youth-serving organization, we believe **these pillars are required to have a strong and functioning democracy:**

REQUIREMENTS

I. Inclusive & equitable participation:

- A.** Civic & community engagement, accessible & low barrier entry points (so it's easy to get involved when you want to), easy access to information outlining how to engage with our systems and institutions
- B.** Citizens are encouraged and supported to create change and reshape our institutions through informal and formal participation methods (like voting, going to town hall meetings, calling or DM'ing your elected officials, starting grassroots initiatives, signing petitions).
- C.** Acknowledging that some individuals need more support to participate in democracy: we must work towards making participation accessible and easy for all people.

II. Barrier-free access to human rights:

- A.** A democracy cannot function properly if basic human needs are at risk.
- B.** Basic needs include access to affordable nourishing food and clean water, secure and adequate housing, education, mental & physical health supports, just and favorable work conditions with a living wage, and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.
- C.** No matter who you are, you have the right to exist and engage in democracy freely. People are considered equal and treated accordingly. Everyone is entitled to the same rights and benefits, while respecting Indigenous people as the inherent caretakers of this territory and their unique rights under treaties.
- D.** Everyone is safe & free to express their individual opinion, thoughts, beliefs, & faith. Diversity is protected, and strong safeguards monitor and suppress hate speech.
- E.** Everyone is protected and served equally by the legal system, without discrimination based on race, nationality or ethnic origin, skin colour, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, age, or mental or physical disability.
- F.** The rights, freedom, and self-determination of Indigenous peoples are protected and respected. Treaty rights are honored fully, and are open to revisitations and revisions at the request of the Indigenous communities they impact. Meaningful reconciliation efforts are informed and guided by the 94 TRC Calls to Action and implemented as soon as possible.

III. Peaceful coexistence & the right to protest:

- A.** The peaceful rotation of power, the right of all political parties to exist and organize at all times, and the respect of diverse political ideologies. This includes cultural pluralism, religious pluralism, and gender pluralism.
- B.** However, organizing around hate and conducting hate speech is unacceptable. People are protected from discrimination under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and hate speech is a crime under the Canadian Criminal Code.

IV. A free & fair electoral process

- A. Every eligible person** should be able to access the electoral process equally; however, we respect that there are some Indigenous communities who choose not to engage formally with Canadian democratic institutions.
- B.** An accountable electoral system that's fair, transparent, accessible, and accountable to voters with methods and procedures clearly defined by the rule of law is essential.
- C.** Folks are comfortable trusting the electoral process and know that whatever the outcome it's a reflection of their collective will.
- D.** Efforts are put towards generating greater access to voting in communities who have faced systemic barriers.

V. Accessible information and strong media institutions

- A.** Supporting programs that encourage digital fluency, media literacy, and civic education available to all.
- B.** Regulate the spread and influence of polarizing misinformation & disinformation.
- C.** Access to information that is as unbiased as possible, or tools that allow us to critically evaluate what we are being exposed to.
- D.** Media institutions providing unbiased information are protected from potential threat or suppression.

* The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Criminal Code of Canada are imperfect and are at odds with documents like UNDRIP.

