

FOCUS: Can you make a difference if you act?

Not everyone needs to take action in the same way to make change happen. When people choose to do what they are most comfortable with and what works for them, more people can get involved. Every action, however small, has an effect.

"I don't think bullying is going away tomorrow. I don't think it's going to go away in five years. It's always going to be there, but as long as we have people working toward preventing it, we're making a difference, we're making progress."

Travis Price

Single action, big effect: Pink Shirt Day

Sometimes a simple action can have repercussions that go well beyond the intended results. That is what high school students Travis Price and DJ Shepherd discovered.

How it started

Grade 12 student Travis Price heard that a grade 9 boy was being bullied for wearing a pink T-shirt on the first day of school.



What they did

- Travis and his friend DJ Shepherd pooled their money and bought as many pink tops as they could.
- They launched a social media campaign, telling other students what they were planning.
- They stood at the doors of the school and handed out the shirts. About half the school wore pink.



Outcome

The bullies were surrounded by a sea of pink. The Pink Shirt Day movement got media coverage and caught on across Canada and around the world.

▲ **SOURCE 4:** Nearly 2000 students participate in a Pink Shirt flash mob in Vancouver. Do you think this made a difference? Why or why not?

Success isn't always what you expect

Not every action gets such a positive result. But even if you don't achieve your goal, doing something can be empowering—just ask the students at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic High School in Guelph, Ontario.

How it started

A Grade 12 student's family, who had been in Canada for five years, was given notice that they would be deported back to Mexico. The family had fled Mexico after being kidnapped and held for ransom. They had obtained work permits but their family business failed, so they would have to leave and reapply to live in Canada from outside the country.

What they did

Students at the school:

- Started a social media campaign
- Contacted their MP and the Minister of Immigration
- Got local papers' attention by holding a vigil and rally
- Some students travelled to Ottawa to talk directly with the Minister of Immigration

Outcome

Despite an amazing show of support from the school and the community, the family had to leave. Before they can return, they must apply for visas from Mexico.

"I think this experience showed me that although we have elected members of parliament, it is also a citizen's job and duty to bring forth issues into their community."

Cecilia Hudecki

"We weren't successful in our fight...and we were all heartbroken. But in this tragic event, we saw a beautiful side to our community, because together we were a family... Was it worth it? It was 100 per cent worth it."

Toby Le

Hard work pays off: SHOW

Students at JH Bruns Collegiate in Winnipeg discovered that taking action can make a difference and in some cases influence government decisions.

How it started

Students started a group called SHOW (Students Helping Our World). They tackled various topics, including terrorism and land mines. In 2010, they decided to focus on poverty in their region.

What they did

- For over a year, students did in-depth research into the causes of and issues surrounding poverty.
- They presented their findings to the legislative assembly.
- Students also raised over \$10 000.

Outcome

In 2011, the Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs increased public transportation funding for low-income users and credited the students' presentation with influencing his decision.

Q7 How do power dynamics change when people become active citizens?

Q8 Do actions have to meet all of their objectives to be successful?

Q9 What cause would you like to support to make a difference? How?

FOCUS: How have Canadians made a difference?

Activism has always been an important part of Canadian democracy. There are many individual Canadians who have taken action to try make a difference. Here are just a few.

"We have a lot of young people, teenagers and people in their 20s who want to see change, because change has been really slow in their generation."
Winona Wheeler



Investigating Canadian activists

Sometimes we would like to take action to bring about change, but we don't really know how. Learning about others who have successfully made a difference can be a good place to start.

The Canadians on the preceding page have all tried to do something to make the world a better place. Select a person from the list, or someone else you want to learn more about, and use an investigative approach to explore their achievements.



SOURCE 5: The Order of Canada is awarded to Canadians who have demonstrated an outstanding level of talent and service, or made an exceptional contribution to Canada and humanity. You can look up the list of recipients for someone to investigate.

<p>ASK QUESTIONS</p>	<p>1. Begin with a question How has this Canadian made a difference? Who was this person? Why did this person take action? What did this person do or achieve?</p>	
<p>GATHER AND ANALYZE</p>	<p>2. Gather information Search online from specific sites or with a specific search focus. Collect all of the sources and information you can find.</p>	<p>3. Analyze your information Where did the source come from and why was it written? What does it tell you about this person?</p>
<p>EVALUATE AND CONCLUDE</p>	<p>4. Evaluate your evidence Evaluate what you have found and make some conclusions. Does all the evidence say the same thing? Are there different perspectives?</p>	<p>5. Make some conclusions Who was this person? Why did this person take action? What did this person do or achieve? Did they make a difference?</p>
<p>COMMUNICATE AND SHARE</p>	<p>6. Communicate and share Decide how best to communicate your findings and conclusions. What form and medium will be most effective?</p>	
<p>ASK MORE QUESTIONS</p>	<p>7. What did you learn? What did you find out that was surprising? What else would you like to know?</p>	

Q10 In what ways do we acknowledge and celebrate our activists? Is it enough?

Q11 Are some contributions more significant than others? Does it matter?

Q12 Do these examples of Canadian activists give you any ideas about what you could do?