Introduction

In our increasingly globalized world, our youth are becoming more and more citizens of the world. As such, they need a solid understanding of social justice, human rights, global democracy, and their role in the creation of just societies. This resource, *Understanding International Law—Classroom resources*, aims to provide students with the knowledge they need to become effective global citizens and undertake global responsibilities as Canadians. International law has many facets, including human rights and humanitarian law, and is increasingly a defining force in our global world. A basic understanding of international legal principles is vital for youth to be able to understand and respond to pressing issues faced by the world today.

This study guide is intended to be used in concert with the Understanding International Law website[1] in order to help students understand the basic principles and issues of international law, and encourage them to think critically about these issues as they become active global citizens and leaders.

Discussion: What is global citizenship?

- "What is citizenship?"
- "What does it mean to be a citizen?"
- "What are the roles of a citizen?"
- "Do citizens have rights?"

Discuss and define different kinds of citizenship: student, community, city or town, region, province, nation, continent, and global. Consider the rights and responsibilities that are relevant to different kinds of citizenship.

Discuss what it means to be an active citizen—how do you go about becoming an active citizen for the different kinds of citizenship discussed? What factors need to be in place in order to become an active citizen (i.e., peace, opportunities for participation, education, freedom from discrimination, etc.)?

Consider the question "What does it mean to be a global citizen?" Some definitions of citizenship may be looked at in order to realize the many perspectives that exist when thinking about this issue on a global scale. Can an effective definition of global citizenship come from a single point of view? Consider how global perspectives might differ in other countries. For example, how might religion, gender, culture, geography and language influence people's perspectives?

Divide students into groups and have them work toward developing a definition of global citizenship. Reference can be made to the factors required for citizenship. Once each group has agreed upon a definition, their definitions may be presented to the class and the class may decide to adopt one definition, or to embrace the variety of definitions presented.

At this point, the following questions may help extend the discussion:

- What needs to happen in order to make the leap from national citizenship to global citizenship?
- What challenges do people face when they decide to become global citizens?
- Do global citizens have any rights?
- In what ways can young people become engaged as global citizens and take action?