



WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW TO VOTE

2021 VOTING GUIDE FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND 2SLGBTQQIA+ VOTERS

CREATED BY NWAC

Native Women's Association of Canada | nwac.ca

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2021

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INTRODUCTION

THIS UPCOMING FEDERAL ELECTION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER. WE NEED A GOVERNMENT THAT WILL DELIVER MEANINGFUL AND CONCRETE CHANGE TO SUPPORT THE SUCCESS, HEALTH, AND SAFETY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS, AND 2SLGBTQQIA+ PEOPLE. TO ACHIEVE THIS, INDIGENOUS WOMEN NEED TO USE THEIR VOICE AND VOTE FOR CHANGE.

Every vote counts and every vote is represented equally. Voting is a chance for Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to be heard and to make a difference. Use your voice this election to fight for the change that Indigenous communities have been asking for far too long.

Indigenous women are among the fastest-growing population segment in Canada. They are also greatly under-represented in voter turnout in Canadian elections.

NWAC is striving to change that, which is why we are releasing this Voter's Guide on when, where, and how to vote.

This guide offers step-by-step voting instructions, along with actionable solutions to some common barriers. It provides information on the benefits and challenges of voting. And, for those who wish to understand their own community's historical relationships to elections and government, it introduces that history alongside an outline of Canada's governmental structure.

**WE ARE
DONE ASKING;
WE ARE VOTING.**

It's time that our
voices are heard.



WHY VOTE?

VOTING IS ABOUT ASSERTING THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHT TO POWER: POWER TO DECIDE ONE'S OWN FUTURE, TO CLAIM AND EXTEND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ONE'S CHILDREN, TO ASSERT THE RIGHTS OF A COMMUNITY, AND TO SHAPE THE BROADER SOCIETY.

At first glance, **"Why should I vote?"** is a difficult question to answer; elections are rarely decided by one vote.

So, consider instead the question, **"Why should we vote?"**

A recent vote count in the electoral district of Labrador West measured the margin of victory at just 5 votes.¹ A single family voting could have changed the outcome. Similarly, in 2017, the governing political party in B.C. lost its majority government by losing one riding. The difference in one riding was 9 votes.²

Now imagine that "we" represents an entire community, or even a network of communities across Canada. In that case, if "we" vote, it can clearly make a political difference, locally, provincially, even nationally.

But beyond the specific victories and defeats, there's a larger reason why Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ persons should vote. When governments know that an entire community can be for or against them in the next election, they are compelled to listen, to respond, to represent the priorities of that community in some way. And that is the basic power at the core of any democracy.

¹Find CBC coverage at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/judicial-recount-for-labrador-west-district-1.5142220>.

²Find MACLEAN'S coverage at <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/nine-voters-who-could-have-swung-the-b-c-election/>.



IN THE END, BEING AN ACTIVE PART OF A COMMUNITY OF VOTERS IS ANOTHER WAY OF STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ITSELF.

NOW, CONSIDER AGAIN THE QUESTION, "WHY SHOULD I VOTE?" PERHAPS THE ANSWER IS SIMPLY, "I VOTE SO THAT WE VOTE, SO THAT WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER."



A HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND VOTING

Traditionally, Indigenous women played a central role in the health and well-being of their communities. They were decision-makers in the use of resources, economics, and politics; they determined leadership; and they were leaders themselves.

Prior to colonization, Indigenous women enjoyed political and economic power comparable to that held by the men in their communities.

Colonization changed those relationships: Indigenous women no longer could expect any sort of gendered power-sharing and would be denied any role in the politics and economics of colonial society, as part of a broader subjugation of all Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Indigenous Peoples would not initially be granted full citizenship in Canada. While Canadians had the right to vote, First Nations people could only vote if they chose to give up their treaty rights and Indian status. This was called “voluntary enfranchisement.”

While non-Indigenous women were granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1921, it was not until 1960 that all First Nations people, men and women, were granted that same right without giving up their treaty rights and status.

Unlike First Nations, Inuit women and men had the right to vote in federal elections held after 1950. Métis men never had specific restrictions put on their right to vote, and Métis women obtained the right in 1921 alongside non-Indigenous women.

**IN 2012, OUT OF 633 CHIEFS,
111 WERE WOMEN.**

Although the percentage of female Indigenous chiefs in 2012 was only 17.5%, this was slightly higher than the percentage of female mayors of Canadian cities.

More women serve in First Nations governments, and a growing number of Indigenous women hold leadership roles in regional and national political organizations.

www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/native-womens-issues/

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADIAN POLITICS

THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADA'S POLITICAL ARENA IS A RECENT PHENOMENON, AND THEY HAVE SINCE SHOWN THEIR VALUE WITHIN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. INDIGENOUS WOMEN ARE RESILIENT; THEY ARE CARETAKERS AND LEADERS AND THEY ARE COMMITTED TO CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE THAT WILL BENEFIT THEIR COMMUNITIES AND ALL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE WORKING WITHIN PARTIES, AS WELL AS RUNNING AS CANDIDATES, AND IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING ROLES. HERE'S A LIST OF NOTABLE INDIGENOUS WOMEN WHO ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN COMMUNITY, FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL, AND TERRITORIAL POLITICS AND IN ACADEMIA AND RESEARCH.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADIAN POLITICS



ETHEL BLONDIN-ANDREWS

Ethel Blondin-Andrews is the first Indigenous woman to be elected to the Parliament of Canada. She is a Dene who was first elected in 1988 as a Member of Parliament (MP) for the riding of Western Arctic in the Northwest Territories. She was re-elected in 1993 and was appointed Secretary of State for Training and Youth, making her the first Indigenous woman to become a member of the Privy Council and Cabinet.



MARY SIMON O.C., O.Q.

From Kuujuaq, Simon is the 30th Governor General of Canada—making history as the first Indigenous person to hold this role. Simon has been an advocate for Indigenous people throughout the course of her career, including during her time as President of the Makivik Corporation, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, and President of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. Simon has also held roles in the government, serving as Canada's first Arctic Ambassador and Canada's first Ambassador to Denmark.



NAHANNI FONTAINE

An Ojibway from Sagkeeng Anishinaabe First Nation, Fontaine is the MLA for St. Johns. She is a nationally recognized expert on Indigenous women in Canada, and has helped to bring international attention to the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Indigenous/police relations, and women's representation in politics. She has been a vocal opponent to the Pallister government's reckless cuts to women's health care and restorative justice programs. She is the NDP Official Opposition's House Leader, Critic for Justice, and spokesperson for Veterans Affairs.



LEAH GAZAN

Leah Gazan is the MP for Winnipeg Centre, the NDP Critic for Families, Children, and Social Development, and the Deputy Critic for Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship. Her recent successes include travelling across the country to push Bill C-262, the *Indigenous Human Rights Act*, and introducing Bill C-323, the *Climate Emergency Action Act*. Before she was an MP, Gazan participated in Idle No More, co-founded the #WeCare campaign advocating to end violence against Indigenous women and girls, and represented Manitoba for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues advocating for the injustices against Indigenous children in the child welfare system.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADIAN POLITICS



MUMILAAQ QAQQAQ

Mumilaaq Qaqqaq is an Inuk activist and politician, currently serving as the MP for Nunavut and the NDP Critic for Northern Affairs and CanNor. During her time as MP, Qaqqaq has strongly advocated for equal rights for Nunavummiut and specifically emphasized ongoing crises of suicide, climate change, and housing. Most recently, Qaqqaq, alongside NDP MP Charlie Angus, has called for the investigation of the abuse that occurred at residential schools as 'crimes against humanity'.



JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD

A member of the We Wai Kai Nation, she is a Canadian politician and the Independent MP for the B.C. riding of Vancouver Granville. She served as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada in the cabinet of Justin Trudeau from 2015-2019, and then as Minister of Veterans Affairs of Canada in early 2019. Before entering Canadian federal politics, she was a Crown Prosecutor for B.C., a Treaty Commissioner and Regional Chief of the B.C. Assembly of First Nations. In 2017, Wilson-Raybould was named Policy-Maker of the Year by the MacDonald-Laurier Institute.



ROSEANNE ARCHIBALD

Roseanne Archibald is a First Nations advocate and politician, currently is the elected National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). She is the first woman to hold this position. This is not the only time Archibald was the first woman to hold a position of leadership. She was the first woman to be elected as chief of Taykwa Tagamou Nation, to act as Deputy Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, to serve as Grand Chief of the Mushkegowuk Council, and to be elected as Ontario Regional Chief.



LORNA STANDINGREADY

Born and raised on the Peepeekisis Reserve, Lorna Standingready excelled at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, University of Regina, and holds a Bachelor of Administration (2000). Lorna was the recipient of the Saskatchewan Indian Women's Association Appreciation Award, and in 2005 she received the Saskatchewan Jubilee Award. She has also been involved in the women's movement, health and child welfare programs and, as of 2008, with the John Howard Society.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CANADIAN POLITICS



BETTY NIPPI-ALBRIGHT

Betty Nippi-Albright is a Canadian politician, who was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in the 2020 Saskatchewan general election. She represents the

electoral district of Saskatoon Centre as a member of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party.



EVA AARIAK

Eva Aariak was elected in the 2008 territorial election to represent the electoral district of Iqaluit East in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. She subsequently served as Premier of Nunavut until 2013.

Aariak was the fifth woman to serve as a premier in Canada.



NELLIE COURNOYEA

A former Canadian politician of Inupiaq heritage, Nellie Cournoyea served as the sixth premier of the Northwest Territories from 1991 to 1995. She was the first

female premier of a Canadian territory and the second female premier in Canadian history.



THELMA J. CHALIFOUX

Thelma Chalifoux is a former Canadian politician and teacher. She was the first female Métis to receive the National Indigenous Achievement Award. Chalifoux was appointed to the Canadian Senate on November 26,

1997. She served in the Senate until February 8, 2004, when she retired and returned to her roots. She now operates the Michif Cultural Institute in St. Albert, Alberta.



TINA KEEPER

Tina Keeper is a Cree activist, politician and former actress from Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has been very active on suicide prevention as a member of a visioning committee for a Manitoba

suicide prevention program. From 2006 to 2008, Keeper was the MP for the riding of Churchill in Manitoba.



CINDY BLACKSTOCK

A Gitksan activist for child welfare, Cindy Blackstock is the co-creator and Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and a professor for the School of Social Work at McGill

University. Blackstock, working with First Nations colleagues, was successful in a human rights challenge against Canada's inequitable provision of child and family services.



CAITLIN TOLLEY

Caitlin Tolley is an Algonquin leader from Kitigan-Zibi. She has been a member of the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council and has worked to advocate for First Nations youth.

In 2012, at the age of 21, she was the youngest band councillor elected to her community.



REBEKAH ELKERTON

An Anishinaabe from Chippewas of the Thames, Rebekah Elkerton was the Vice-President of the First Peoples' Council at Carleton University and has worked to advocate for First Nations women while at the Native Women's Association of Canada and throughout her personal life. She was also on the Indigenous Education Council

and was the recipient of the prestigious Rose Nolan Memorial Scholarship. After receiving her Master of Arts from Carleton University in 2017, Rebekah now works as a Program Coordinator and Indigenous Studies Student Affairs at McGill University.

For a complete list of Indigenous women in federal and provincial politics visit:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_indigenous_Canadian_politicians#House_of_Commons



CANADA'S SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

The Canadian government is a representative democracy. This means it is a government in which all citizens have the right to participate in decisions that affect them, either directly or through an elected representative.

Prior to European contact, democratic forms of government were already well-known to Indigenous Peoples in Canada and were included in the range of systems by which they governed themselves. In addition to being an independent sovereign democracy, Canada is also a federal state made up of 10 provinces and three territories.

In democracies such as Canada, political parties are elected to run a government. A political party is a group of people who share common ideas, goals, and principles as to how the country should be governed.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE WORDS, PARLIAMENT, AND, GOVERNMENT, DO NOT MEAN THE SAME THING.

GOVERNMENT:

the running or governing
of a country

PARLIAMENT:

is made up of the Crown, Senate, and
House of Commons and it has legislative
(law-making) responsibilities



FEDERAL LEVEL

(THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA)

Responsible for things that affect the whole country: citizenship and immigration, foreign affairs, national defence, and trade. It is also responsible for Crown-Indigenous relations and Indigenous services.



PROVINCIAL / TERRITORIAL LEVEL

(FOR EXAMPLE, THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA)

Is responsible for things within that region, such as social services (education and health care), property, civil rights, water management, and highways.



MUNICIPAL LEVEL

(FOR EXAMPLE, THE CITY OF TORONTO)

Is usually linked to a city, town, or district. It is responsible for areas such as water and sewer services, roadways, public transit, local police, firefighting, animal control, and waste management.

LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

WHAT ARE THE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

Canada has three main levels of government:

Federal, provincial or territorial, and municipal.

Sometimes these three levels of government share responsibilities in terms of the environment, parks, economic development, and laws.

Also, across the country, there are band councils that govern First Nations communities, as well as Inuit and Métis governance structures that make decisions, and policies in their communities. These elected councils are similar to municipal councils. They make decisions on issues such as membership, education, health, cultural programs, planning and land use, hunting, fishing, trapping and plant harvesting.

HOW IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURED?



EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The executive branch is the decision-making branch of the government and is made of the Crown, the Prime Minister, and the Cabinet.

CROWN: The Governor General (GG) is the Queen's representative in Canada. The GG does not support any political party, and today has mostly ceremonial duties. However, the GG is responsible for signing bills into law to make them official (also known as giving "royal assent") and is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Forces.

PRIME MINISTER: The Prime Minister is the head of the government and is in charge of the Cabinet. The Prime Minister is the leader of the party that has the most seats in the House of Commons.

CABINET: Cabinet ministers are usually selected from the members of the House of Commons but can also come from the Senate or outside of Parliament. The Prime Minister selects Cabinet ministers, and the ministers are responsible for different federal departments, such as Global Affairs Canada.



LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The legislative branch of the federal government is responsible for approving or rejecting proposed federal laws. It is made up of two chambers, the House of Commons and Senate. Because there are two chambers, the system is referred to as "bicameral."

House of Commons: With 338 elected Member of Parliament (MPs), the House of Commons votes on bills and passes laws. MPs represent the people in their riding and are usually associated with a political party. Each MP represents approximately 100,000 Canadians. There are 338 seats in the House of Commons, representing 338 ridings (electoral districts) and 16 registered political parties, as well as independent MPs.

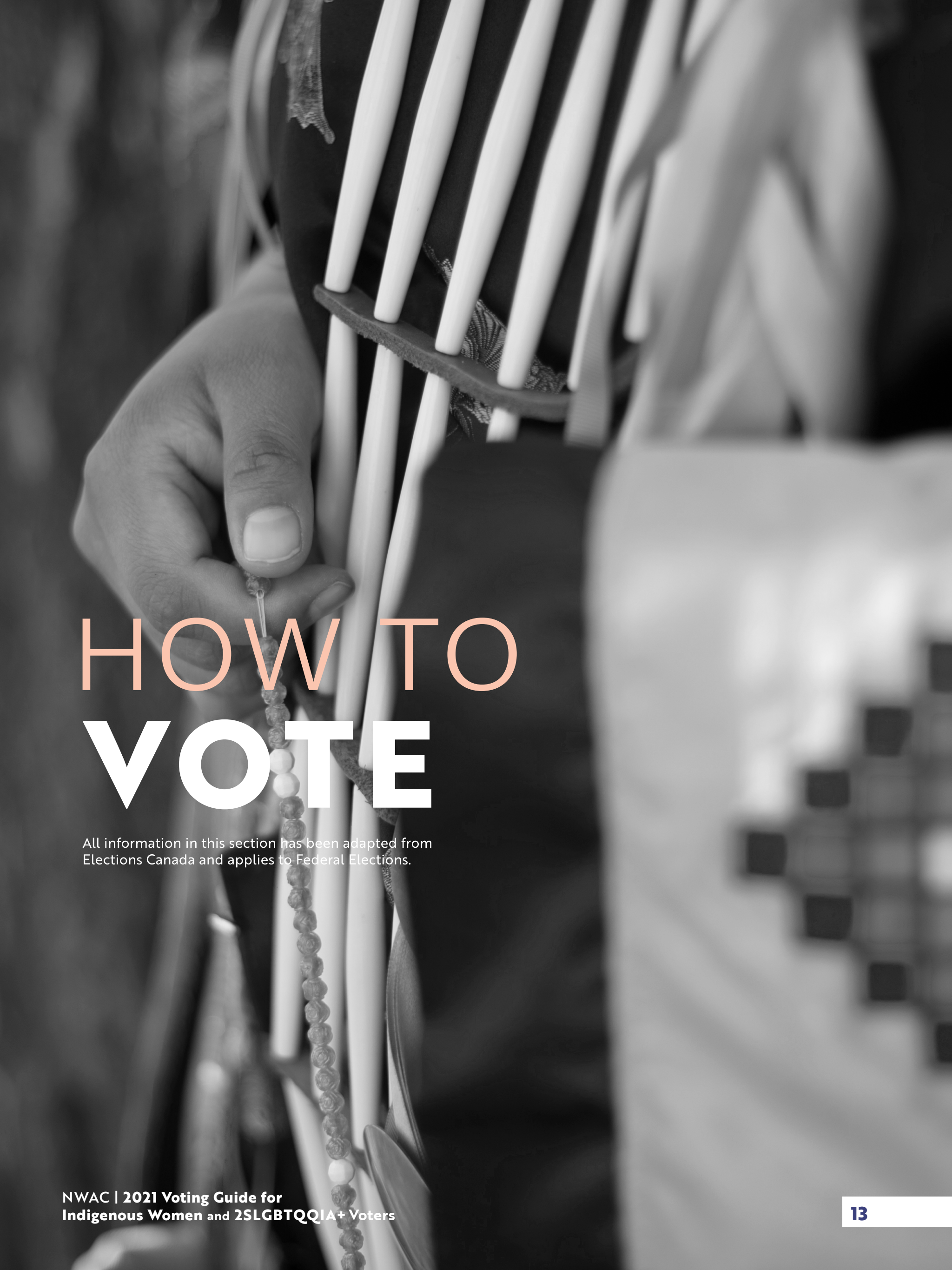
Senate: Senators are appointed by the GG on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Senate reviews and debates bills as part of the process of voting bills into law. Senators can also present petitions, discuss committee reports, and make statements on key issues.



JUDICIAL BRANCH

The judicial branch of government is responsible, through a series of independent courts, for applying laws to citizens, governments, and corporations.

Federal judges are appointed by the federal government.



HOW TO VOTE

All information in this section has been adapted from Elections Canada and applies to Federal Elections.