

Human Rights in Canada: A History

Dominique Clement. Wilfrid Laurier University (IPS, U.S. dist.; UTP, Canadian dist.), \$24.99 (232p) ISBN 978-1-77112-163-7

The 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been the basis of controversial court decisions that have legalized same-sex marriage and doctor-assisted suicide. Clement (*Canada's Rights Revolution*) presents a history of how Canada developed "its own unique rights culture," shaped by the idea that "human rights are a sociological and historical phenomenon as well as a legal fact." The meaning of human rights has changed over time because societies are dynamic, he explains. Each of the five chapters covers a different aspect of rights-culture formation. Clement also discusses the limits of human rights in specific historical eras, as well as how those limits came to be challenged and expanded. In the 19th century, for example, rights talk centered around notions of civil and political rights (usually for white men only). By the mid-20th century, social movements by women, LGBTQ people, aboriginal peoples, and others helped expand human rights to include notions of personal and sexual identity, leading to the adoption of freedom from discrimination as a core human right. Readers may expect this academic study to be dry, but both its content and style make it a good read. The book will be an indispensable resource for anyone interested in the formation of modern Canada. (Mar.)