



# Couples and the Law

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## Teacher's Guide



## About Éducaloi and This Guide

Éducaloi is a non-profit organization that explains the law to Quebecers in simple language.

We do this through our website, print publications, videos, workshops, teaching guides and other activities.

The law is part of everyday life, even when we don't realize it. Think of driving a car, cell phone contracts or voting.

That's why Éducaloi makes guides for adult education teachers: real-life situations are their entry points for teaching.

The guides suggest teaching activities that link our legal information and courses in Quebec's adult education curriculum.

Each guide has a teacher and student version. The student version is available in SMART Notebook® form for whiteboards or as a PDF. For the student version, and to see other guides, go to [educaloi.qc.ca/adulted](http://educaloi.qc.ca/adulted).

We hope the guides inspire you to create other learning situations using legal information on our website: [www.educaloi.qc.ca](http://www.educaloi.qc.ca).

Éducaloi thanks teachers Peggy Chrisovergis and Janis Zubalik, who helped us create these guides.

We welcome your comments. Write to us at [educaloi@educaloi.qc.ca](mailto:educaloi@educaloi.qc.ca).

# Couples and the Law

<b>Subject Area:</b> Languages	<b>Program of Study:</b> English, Language of Instruction
<b>Level:</b> Secondary Cycle One; Pre-Secondary	<b>Suggested Courses:</b> Rights and Responsibilities (ENG-P2102-4); Changes: Transitions and Challenges (PRS-P101-2)
<b>Learning Situation</b>	Expressing concern and providing information about couples in Quebec
<b>Learning Goal</b>	Raising awareness about the law relating to couples in Quebec
<b>Targeted Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Family relations and marital status: e.g., single, common-law, widowed, divorced</li> <li>● Obligations and law: rights, responsibilities, entitlement, inheritance, common-law, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Language Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expressing assumptions about the law</li> <li>● Comparing and contrasting information</li> <li>● Providing information</li> <li>● Expressing concern</li> </ul>
<b>Hook</b>	Access prior knowledge about the law relating to couples in Quebec
<b>Activities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete a survey about the law and couples</li> <li>2. Scan a website for information, compare answers with classmates and share discoveries</li> <li>3. Introduce the learning situation</li> <li>4. Read the fact situations</li> <li>5. Write appropriate emails</li> </ol>
<b>Appendices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marital Status Page of 2016 Census</li> <li>2. Marital Status Survey</li> <li>3. Answer Key to Survey</li> <li>4. Your Friends' Situations</li> <li>5. Answer Key to Friends' Situations</li> <li>6. Statistics on Marital Trends and Living Arrangements in Canada</li> </ol>
<b>Estimated Time</b>	6 hours

# Elicit Prior Knowledge

## Whole Class

- Display the image at Slide 3 in the Student's Guide, or just start with the questions below.
  1. Did you complete the 2016 Canadian census?
  2. Have you ever completed a census?
  3. What kind of information is collected in a census?
  4. Does the information collected change over time? Why or why not?
  5. Is the information collected important? Why or why not?
- Elicit a brief discussion about trends.
- Elicit some reasons that affect trends, for example, changes in the law and changing cultural norms.
- Display the image regarding marital status from the 2016 census (Appendix 1 in this guide and Slide 4 in the Student Guide.) You might want to print and distribute copies to students.
- Tell students that this is a page from the 2016 Canadian census.
- Use the questions below or other prompts to elicit students' prior knowledge to prepare them for the learning situation.
  1. What is this part of the census about?
  2. In Question 4, which situation describes someone whose partner has died?
  3. If someone answers Yes to Question 5, which situations of Question 4 can apply to him or her? (For example: Can someone be widowed and currently be in a common-law relationship?) Describe the situation.
  4. Do you think all the options in Question 6 were in the 1911 census? The 1986 census? The 2011 census? Why or why not?
- Tell students that we're going to be learning about laws relating to couples in Quebec.

## Activity 1

# Test Your Knowledge

### Individual and Pair or Group work

- Have students complete Step 1 of the survey about the laws relating to couples in Quebec. (See Appendix 2 of this guide. To display the survey for students, click on the attachment in Slide 6 of the Student's Guide.)
- Tell students that people have different assumptions about the law and that this is not a test.
- Review the instructions for Step 1 of the survey. Model this if necessary with the first statement.
- You might want to provide vocabulary-building strategies, i.e., using a dictionary, implied meaning through context, etc.
- Have students compare their answers in groups and exchange opinions, assumptions and ideas (Step 2 of the survey).

## Activity 2

# Read Information and Rate Yourself

### Individual or Pair Work and Whole Class

- Tell students that they will be rating themselves according to information they find on the Éducaloi website.
- Go to the website home page ([www.educaloi.qc.ca](http://www.educaloi.qc.ca) - see image below). This image is also at Slide 7 of the Notebook version of the Student's Guide.



- Ask students where they might find information relevant to the survey questions. The icons (symbols) on the home page can be an initial guide.
- Review scanning strategies (icons, headings, key words, how to find main ideas in an article, etc.).
- Ask them to try to find articles with answers to the survey questions.
- If you don't have access to a computer lab, photocopy and distribute the appropriate articles from the website:

- Marriage in Quebec:  
[www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/marriage-quebec](http://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/marriage-quebec)
- Same-Sex Couples:  
[www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/same-sex-couples](http://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/same-sex-couples)
- Living Apart: Different From Legal Separation:  
[www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/living-apart-different-legal-separation](http://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/living-apart-different-legal-separation)
- Common-Law Couples: Making A Life Together Without Being Married:  
[www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/common-law-couples-making-life-together-without-being-married](http://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/capsules/common-law-couples-making-life-together-without-being-married)

- Review the survey rating system with your students.
- Have students compare their initial answers to the survey against information in the Éducaloi articles and rate themselves. (There is an answer key to the survey in Appendix 3 to this guide.)
- Ask students about any surprises and new discoveries.
  1. Were your assumptions correct?
  2. Did you discover anything new?

## Introduce Learning Situation

### Whole Class

- Introduce the situation.

#### Learning Situation

You recently read information about the laws regarding couples in Quebec. You were surprised at some of the things you discovered.

You know some couples who might not be aware of these laws.

Read the situations of some of your friends and write appropriate emails to them (if necessary) expressing your concern and providing information.

## Read Situations

### Individual or Whole Class

- Distribute the situations to each student (See Appendix 4 of this guide. To display the situations to students, click on the linked attachment in Slide 9 of the Notebook version of the Student Guide.)
- Have students read each situation. You might want to do this as a whole class.
- Ask students whether every situation merits an email expressing concern.

# Write an Email


## Individual Activity

- Tell students that they will be writing emails to their friends about what they have discovered about the laws relating to couples in Quebec.
- Co-create an email checklist with the students that includes these elements:
  - email structure, e.g., subject line, body, salutation
  - appropriate language functions for this exercise:
    - expressing concern
    - providing subtle advice
  - appropriate and pertinent grammar and language chunks:
    - using contrasts: I thought that it was the same but... married couples automatically... whereas, common-law couples...
    - referencing material: it says that... the websites states that...
- Provide a model if necessary.
- Have students peer-evaluate using the checklist.
- Collect these emails.
- Review situations as a whole class (who did or who did not require an email).





# Appendix 1: Marital Status Page of 2016 Canadian Census

1 NAME	PERSON 1	PERSON 2
<p>In the spaces provided, copy the names in the same order as in <b>step B</b>. Then answer the following questions for <b>each</b> person.</p>	<p>Family name</p> <p>Given name</p>	<p>Family name</p> <p>Given name</p>
<p>The following questions refer to each person's situation on <b>May 10, 2016</b>, unless otherwise specified.</p>		
<p><b>2</b> What is this person's <b>sex</b>?</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Male</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Female</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Male</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Female</p>
<p><b>3</b> What are this person's <b>date of birth and age</b>?</p> <p>Day Month Year</p> <p>Example: <input type="text" value="23"/> <input type="text" value="02"/> <input type="text" value="1974"/> If exact date is not known, enter best estimate.</p> <p>Age <input type="text" value="42"/> For children under the age of 1, enter 0.</p>	<p>Day Month Year</p> <p><input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p> <p>Age <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p>	<p>Day Month Year</p> <p><input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p> <p>Age <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p>
FOR INFORMATION ONLY		
<p><b>4</b> What is this person's <b>marital status</b>?</p> <p>Mark "<input checked="" type="radio"/>" one circle only.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Never legally married</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Legally married (and not separated)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Separated, but still legally married</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Divorced</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Widowed</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Never legally married</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Legally married (and not separated)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Separated, but still legally married</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Divorced</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Widowed</p>
<p><b>5</b> Is this person living with a <b>common-law</b> partner?</p> <p><b>Common-law</b> refers to two people who live together as a couple but who are not legally married to each other.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p><b>6</b> What is the <b>relationship</b> of this person to <b>Person 1</b>?</p> <p>If none of the responses in the list describes this person's relationship to Person 1, then specify a response under "Other relationship".</p>	<p><input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>PERSON 1</b></p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Opposite-sex husband or wife of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Opposite-sex common-law partner of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Same-sex married spouse of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Same-sex common-law partner of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Son or daughter of Person 1 only</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Grandchild of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Son-in-law or daughter-in-law of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Father or mother of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Father-in-law or mother-in-law of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Brother or sister of Person 1</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Foster child</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Room-mate, lodger or boarder</p> <p>Other relationship – specify:</p> <p><input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p> <p><input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p>
<p>Visit <a href="http://www.census.gc.ca">www.census.gc.ca</a>                  Call 1-855-700-2016                  Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.                  Saturday and Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.</p>		
 0104		

# Appendix 2: Marital Status Survey

**Survey: What I know about the law regarding couples in Quebec**

**Complete the survey to test your knowledge.**

## Step I:

Read each of the survey statements.

Put a check under the column that best reflects what you think about the laws in Quebec.

## Step II:

Compare your answers in a group.

Share and exchange your ideas and give reasons for your answers.

## Step III:

Read information about the law regarding couples in Quebec on the Éducaloi website and rate yourself.

- 2 points for every answer you got correct
- 1 point for every “not sure” answer
- 0 points for every incorrect answer

Statement	True	False	Not Sure
1. There is no standard definition of a common-law couple in Quebec.			
2. If you live with someone as a couple for more than three years, you have the same status and the same rights as someone who got married.			
3. If you don't get married but just live together in a common-law relationship, you will not automatically inherit property from your partner when he or she dies.			
4. Legally, you can't be married to one person and be in a common-law relationship with someone else.			
5. Common-law couples are immediately recognized under the law as soon as they tell their friends and families that they are living together.			
6. Same-sex marriage has been legal for more than a decade.			
7. All married couples, of whatever gender, share the same rights.			
8. It is illegal to be married to more than one person at the same time.			
<b>Total:</b>			

## Appendix 3: Answer Key to Survey

- Question 1:** True.  
Various laws define "common-law" in various ways.
- Question 2:** False.  
There are important differences between married and common-law (unmarried) couples in Quebec.
- Question 3:** True.  
If your common-law partner did not make a will, you do not automatically inherit from him or her.
- Question 4:** False:  
There is no legal rule against this.
- Question 5:** They might be recognized under some laws after living together for a certain time, or after having children, but various laws have various ways of recognizing common-law couples.
- Question 6:** True (in Canada).
- Question 7:** True.
- Question 8:** True.

## Appendix 4: Your Friends' Situations

### Clara & Manuel

Clara and Manuel have been married for several years and have four children. Manuel has a great opportunity to take a job for a year in Toronto. They want their children to continue their education in Quebec, so Clara would stay with the children. They are scared they might be considered separated.

### Lawrence & Sabrina

Lawrence and Sabrina are a gay middle-aged couple who have been living together for over five years. They recently moved to Canada. They heard that they can get married here and that their marriage will be recognized all over the world.

### Pat & Chris

Pat and Chris got divorced four years ago. They have joint custody of their child, who is now away at university. You recently heard that Pat and Chris are back together and are going on a "second honeymoon" to Niagara Falls.

### Terrance

Terrance has four children. Her second daughter, Sylvia (who just turned 17) wants to get married next month.

### Vinh

Vinh is still legally married, but separated from his wife and is now living with someone else. You've had many conversations about whether this is legal or not in Quebec.

### Sam and Luiza

Sam and Luiza have been living together for 35 years but never got married. They have two children. In one of your recent conversations, you talked about the importance of having a will. Neither Sam nor Luiza have a will but assume they will automatically inherit from each other if one of them dies.

## Appendix 5: Answer Key to Friends' Situations

### Clara & Manuel

Married couples don't have to live together to maintain their marriage status.

### Lawrence & Sabrina

This is not necessarily true. Different countries have different laws on same-sex marriage. Lawrence and Sabrina should consult the embassy or consulate of the countries where they might want their marriage to be recognized.

### Pat & Chris

No relevant legal issue, so either an email is not necessary, or you can send an email saying "bon voyage"!

### Terrance

Because of her age, Terrance's daughter needs permission from Terrance to get married.

### Vinh

This is legal in Quebec. But a person can only be married to one person at a time. If Vinh wants to get married again, he needs to get a divorce first.

### Sam and Luiza

They will not automatically inherit from each other if one of them dies. They need to make this explicit in a will.

# Appendix 6: Extra Resources for Teachers: Marital Trends and Living Arrangements in Canada

Statistics Canada has a number of publications about trends in marital status and living arrangements in Canada. You can use them to lead a discussion on social trends or as a hook.

Here are two examples:

- *Marital Status: Overview, 2011* (See especially pages 6 and 7.)  
[www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-209-x/2013001/article/11788-eng.pdf](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-209-x/2013001/article/11788-eng.pdf)
- *Living Apart Together, 2013*  
This report deals with couples in stable relationships who do not live together. The overview and introduction might be enough information for your purposes.  
[www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2013001/article/11771-eng.pdf](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2013001/article/11771-eng.pdf)

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The legal information in this guide should not be taken as advice. If you need advice on a specific situation, go to the Get More Help section of Éducaloi's website.

The law changes over time. The legal information in this guide is up to date to July 11, 2016. For the most recent information, go to Éducaloi's website.

Teachers in Quebec schools may make copies of this guide, but for educational purposes only. The legal content in this guide must not be altered.

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