

**Abstract Title:** Dietetics past, present and future: Dietitians' roles in affecting social change  
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**Objectives:** The dual purposes of this project were to learn about the history of dietetics and to learn from the past to envision roles for dietitians on advocating for social change.

**Method:** For Senior Seminar, the capstone course for the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition, a literature search was conducted regarding the history of dietetic practice related to social change in Canada. Search terms included *home economics*, *dietetics*, *dietetic practice*, *social change*, and *dietetics future*. Eleven articles were reviewed on the history of home economics and dietetics since the 1800s, dietitians' roles in social change, and the importance of imagination to advance practice. Sources reviewed included all issues of the Canadian Dietetic Association/Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research, the Dietitians of Canada website, the Canadian Encyclopedia, and Practice-based Evidence in Nutrition [PEN].

**Results:** Dietetics and home economics professionals have advocated for and achieved positive social change originating from the beginnings of home economics in the late 1800s. Creativity, innovation, and imagination have been beneficial and are encouraged to continue to affect social change. Many of the political issues dietitians have worked to address reflect the Social Determinants of Health used in present-day practice.

**Conclusions:** Dietitians have had and continue to have important roles in affecting social change. Historically, dietitians have drawn upon more than nutritional knowledge to address the root of social inequities that affect nutritional health. More research is required to further these learnings and to educate dietitians on a social change-oriented approach to practice.

**Significance to the field of dietetics:** As the dietetics profession is largely affected by politics, dietitians in Canada can benefit from understanding the creative, innovative and imaginative practice from leaders in the past to address the root causes of social issues and inequalities that affect nutritional health and well-being.