



NATURE'S FIRST DEFENDERS

Part 4: Water is Life – Standing Rock and the Dakota Access Pipeline

Time: One to two 45-minute periods

Objective:

The student will...

- Critically examine current events related to indigenous land rights and development.

Materials:

- Computer, projector, Internet
- Access to the video *Mni Wiconi: The Stand at Standing Rock* (8:26 min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FDuqYld8C8&feature=youtu.be>
- Student copies of the following articles or online access to them
 - “North Dakota Oil Pipeline Battle: Who’s Fighting and Why,” *The New York Times*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/02/us/north-dakota-oil-pipeline-battle-whos-fighting-and-why.html>
 - “The Real Story: The Dakota Access Pipeline,” *Voice of America News*
<http://www.voanews.com/a/dakota-access-pipeline/3563592.html>
 - *Dakota Access Pipeline Facts* website (sponsored by Energy Transfer partners, the company behind the pipeline)
<https://dapipelinefacts.com/>
 - “Taking a Stand at Standing Rock,” Op-Ed by David Archambault II, Chairman of Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, *The New York Times*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/opinion/taking-a-stand-at-standing-rock.html>

Introduction:

The events surrounding the conflict at Standing Rock in 2016 provide an engaging and timely way to explore the intersection between gas and oil infrastructure development, the Great Sioux Nation Territory, and the rights afforded to the Nation through the Laramie Treaty of 1851 and 1868.

This current event continues to evolve at this time, so this lesson first establishes context for the conflict and then explores larger questions around media literacy, environmental justice, and the rights of indigenous peoples and their ancestral lands. Depending on the status of the pipeline at the time of teaching, you can explore how the situation has developed.

Suggested Flow:

1. As an entry task, have students answer the question **“What do you know about the Dakota Access Pipeline and the protests associated with it? Write a few sentences explaining who is involved and what’s at stake. If you don’t know anything about it, it’s okay to write that you don’t know or aren’t sure.”**
2. Have a short discussion with students to lay out what everyone knows so far. You can distribute the event map graphic organizer found here <https://natureworkseverywhere.org/resources/natures-first-defenders/> during the discussion to capture what the class already knows. The answer key can be found on page 5 of this document.
3. As an introduction to the events at Standing Rock from the native perspective, show the short film *Mni Wiconi: The Stand at Standing Rock* (8:26 min). Students should continue to fill out the event map while watching (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FDuqYld8C8&feature=youtu.be>).
4. Either have students read the following articles online or print and distribute copies. To save class time, this could be done as homework. Students should be able to complete the event map and be prepared for further discussion after completing these readings.
 - “North Dakota Oil Pipeline Battle: Who’s Fighting and Why,” *The New York Times*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/02/us/north-dakota-oil-pipeline-battle-whos-fighting-and-why.html>
 - “The Real Story: The Dakota Access Pipeline,” *Voice of America News*
<http://www.voanews.com/a/dakota-access-pipeline/3563592.html>
 - *Dakota Access Pipeline Facts* website (sponsored by Energy Transfer partners, the company behind the pipeline)
<https://dapipelinefacts.com/>
 - “Taking a Stand at Standing Rock,” Op-Ed by David Archambault II, Chairman of Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, *The New York Times*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/opinion/taking-a-stand-at-standing-rock.html>
5. After students have completed the readings, briefly go over the event map to make sure there are no remaining questions. Then have a class discussion with students by asking how the resources they’ve read are different. Do these resources represent fact, opinion, analysis, recommendation or a mixture of the four? How can you use these different resources to come to an understanding of the issues? Are these resources objective (not influenced by personal feelings or opinions) or subjective (based on personal feelings or opinions)? In what ways? Are there other sources that should be examined? If so, which ones?
6. Have a more structured discussion with students that addresses the events leading up to the protests of 2016. This discussion uses Standing Rock as the basis, but explores deeper cultural values, environmental justice, media literacy, and ultimately the rights of indigenous people and their ancestral lands. Choose from the prompts below to structure the discussion. Consider using a fishbowl where students sit in two concentric circles and those on the inner circle try to answer the questions below using evidence from their readings. Students in the outside circle listen and take notes on the discussion. Then have students switch roles and repeat. If more research needs to be done to answer a question, have students note this and table that part of the discussion until follow-up research can be done.

Here are more detailed instructions on using a fishbowl <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/fishbowl>.

Possible discussion topics:

- Describe the goals of the Standing Rock Sioux and the Dakota Access Pipeline supporting companies? What are their motivations and how are these motivations different?
 - How is this a story about society's demand for energy?
 - Does the film *Mni Winconi* tell the whole story? Are there other stories we should hear?
 - Who else might be affected by the pipeline?
 - What types of sources should we explore to learn more about Standing Rock?
 - Is it possible to find a solution where both parties – the corporations behind the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Standing Rock Sioux – will be satisfied with the results?
 - How can future conflicts like this be avoided?
 - How can policy makers weigh the risks and benefits of pipelines? What information would a policymaker need to determine if the benefits outweigh the risks? Who bears the risks and who benefits?
 - What are the alternatives to pipelines? What are the positives and negatives of these alternatives?
 - How is this a story about environmental justice?
 - Is legal authority sufficient to make decisions over pipelines and other development projects?
 - How should we consider the appropriate role in decision-making of the groups with current legal jurisdiction and groups who have a long-standing, historic record of using the land for their livelihoods?
 - How do we consider the rights and decision-making authority related to the land and waters on which the pipeline will be built compared to the rights and decision-making authority of the people who would be impacted by a rupture?
 - Do we need to differentiate the rights of protesters legitimately concerned about disruption of their livelihoods from the protests based on anti-pipeline principles?
 - How can we equitably consider the potential impact on and concerns of the more populated Bismarck community and the less-populated Standing Rock Sioux reservation?
 - How should we consider the lower economic cost of a potential rupture if the pipeline is located further from Bismarck and closer to the Standing Rock Sioux lands?
7. To conclude, have students write a reflection of the learning process they went through during this lesson. Ask them to respond to the following prompts:
- Describe how it felt to learn about the various sides to this conflict.
 - Consider how your exploration of different media sources informed or impacted your understanding of the situation. Describe how your understanding has evolved since the entry task activity at the beginning of class.
 - Reflect on the fishbowl activity and describe what you learned.
 - Evaluate your participation as listener and active participant in the fishbowl and provide feedback on improving future discussions.

8. As an extension, you could have students explore if there are similar events (in the past or present) in your state involving projects that impact native lands.

Teacher's Note:

On December 4, 2016, the Army Corps of Engineers declared that they would not approve an easement to allow the proposed pipeline to cross under Lake Oahe and would explore alternate routes. Here's the statement from the U.S. Army regarding the pipeline:

https://www.army.mil/article/179095/army_will_not_grant_easement_for_dakota_access_pipeline_crossing.

Then on January 24, 2017, President Trump signed a memorandum instructing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to review and approve the pipeline in an expedited manner. The memorandum also asks the Army to consider dropping the Environmental Impact Statement that resulted from a previous memorandum issued by then President Obama. Read more about it here: <http://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-keystone-pipeline-keystone-xl-dakota-access-pipeline-environment-547752>

Answer Key for Dakota Access Pipeline Event Map

