



1. Analyze ideas and information from multiple sources:

- Determine the validity of information based on context, bias, sources, objectivity, evidence or reliability;
- Evaluate personal assumptions and opinions;

Date: _____

Dene Resistance to Colonialism: The Berger Inquiry



Social Studies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Please read this Acknowledgement before the start of this lesson to respect the knowledge that is being shared and the Land of the People where the knowledge originates.:

This lesson comes from the Yellowknives Dene First Nations peoples of Chief Drygeese Territory Treaty 11. The Yellowknives Dene live on the traditional territory of Dettah and Ndilꞌ located near Yellowknife NT. The Dene have lived on the land that surrounds Great Slave Lake where they harvest medicines and hunt to provide for their communities. This history of the Dene shows their migration routes during different seasons where they would fish on the land in the summer and migrate north to hunt for caribou in the tundra. The Dene in this region have lived on and with their land since time immemorial and remain on their traditional land where they continue to pass down their traditional knowledge to generations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this lesson plan, students will be able to:

1. Analyze ideas and information from multiple sources:

- Determine the validity of information based on context, bias, sources, objectivity, evidence or reliability;
- Evaluate personal assumptions and opinions;

2. Understand diverse historical and contemporary perspectives within and across cultures and develop reasoned arguments supported by historical and contemporary evidence;

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3. Develop and express an informed position on an issue:

- Use research tools and methods to investigate issues;
- Consult a wide variety of sources, including oral histories, that reflect varied viewpoints on particular issues.

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Origin

Dechinta Centre for Research
and Learning
Yellowknife
Northwest Territories

Learning Level / Grade

Youth (up to age
30)

Also: 11, 12, Post-Secondary



240 mins

LIST OF ACTIVITIES

1. Group Project: Dene Pipeline

MATERIALS

DESCRIPTION

In this lesson plan, students will learn about the history of the Dene Nation's resistance to the 1970s MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Project, and their participation in the Berger Inquiry. Using key documents with an opportunity to conduct their own research on differing positions on northern development in the 1970s, students will come away with an understanding of the history of the Berger Inquiry and the contemporary implications.

Activity includes:

- 1) Introductory Lecture/Context setting
- 2) Group Work
- 3) Group Presentation
- 4) Personal reflection on critical sources.

HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:

- Language and Culture
- Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders
- Relationship with family, ancestors
- Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)

TEACHERS' GUIDE

Background/Foundational Information

- In 1974 oil and gas exploration in the Canadian north had boomed after the discovery of a large pool of oil at Prudhoe Bay in Alaska, resulting in industry pushing for infrastructure developments that would facilitate the shipment of petroleum south to markets. The proposed pipeline would cut through the MacKenzie Valley.

During this period, Indigenous organizations in the north were gathering momentum in resistance to the 1969 White Paper which proposed to eliminate the Indian Act and the specific rights of Indigenous peoples. The Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories (later the Dene Nation) filed a legal caveat claiming an interest in 450,000 square miles (1,000,000 sq. km.) of the Northwest Territories claiming that Indigenous peoples retained rights to the area of the MacKenzie Valley. With conflict between Indigenous rights and legal title developing, Jean Chretien, Canada's Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) asked Justice Thomas Berger of the Supreme Court of British Columbia to lead the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry.

This inquiry was to determine the feasibility of this pipeline project. Berger travelled to every community that would be effected by the pipeline, accompanied by expert witnesses, researchers, and an reporting team that translated broadcasts into 6 Indigenous languages each night.

The Inquiry's final report was released on May 9, 1977. Berger recommended a 10 year moratorium on the pipeline project, and no pipeline has been built since.

The Berger Inquiry is a significant moment in Canadian history where the Canadian state recognized the authority of Indigenous Nations to determine the economic and resource development in their territory. The Berger Inquiry also led to significant changes in the NWT, where Indigenous individuals and nations had a platform to fully represent themselves rather than having the state act on their behalf.

This lesson plan is designed to offer students the opportunity to conduct their own research into different perspectives on the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Project. They will then be asked to share with the class, and reflect personally on why different parties had different perspectives on the pipeline project.

ACTIVITIES

1 - Group Project: Dene Pipeline**Purpose**

The purpose of this activity is to provide learners the opportunity to engage in research activities and understand different perspectives on the Berger Inquiry and MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Project.

Students will work in small groups to research the positions of different stakeholders in the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Project. They will then present their positions collectively. Student groups will need to plan for homework reading, watching videos, researching their positions, and working with their group outside of class time.

NOTE: The four hour estimate for this activity is the in-class time that accounts for the introductory and contextual lecture by the teacher - or watching the video - and the group presentations. It is only an estimate; the teacher can lengthen or shorten the time as necessary for the size and level of the class.

Time: 240 mins

Activity Instructions

The instructor can begin the lesson with an introductory lecture, guiding students through the associated readings, or showing one of the Berger Inquiry films. Students should be encouraged to think about and understand the historical context of the time, the values that were important at the time, and whose voices were being heard and represented in the readings and materials.

Students will divide into four different groups representing:

- 1) Federal Government
- 2) Dene Nation
- 3) Oil and Gas Industry
- 4) Non-Indigenous Canadian Public

Each group will be asked to research the following questions in order to make a group presentation (research can be assigned as homework or in class; if during class, the length of this lesson can be extended to multiple class sessions). We suggest that presentations should be between 5-10 minutes in length, followed by a 10 minute question and answer session from the other stakeholder groups.

Questions:

- 1) Who are you?
- 2) What is your position on the pipeline project?
- 3) Why do you hold this position?
- 4) What is your relationship to land?

In addition, the following questions will help guide the student groups in their research. Student groups will be asked to reflect on and answer these questions as part of their preparations for their presentations. Answers to these questions can be given in the facilitated wrap up of the conversation. The instructor can ask each group to reflect on these questions and present back to the class:

- What resources could you find to support your work? Who wrote them? Are there any points of view that are missing?
- Who are you responsible to? For example, are you responsible to your community? To your stakeholders? To Canadian citizens? How does this influence your position?
- Who do you leave out when you are taking this position?

TEACHING NOTES

ASSESSMENT

This section contains information for assessing progress in students' learning. While Indigenous approaches to assessment may be highlighted, conventional assessment methods may also be discussed.

Educator may assess the willingness of students to engage with integrity with positions that may not reflect their own, and represent the interest of the communities they are responsible to.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

Resource Title	Type
Berger- Letter to Minister	Link 
Letter from Berger to Minister summarizing the report.	
Video: Dene Chief Frank T'Seleie - Mackenzie Valley pipeline/Gas Project in 1975	Link 
Video of Chief Frank T'Seleie's testimony	
Webpage: CBC- Digital Archives on the Berger Inquiry	Link 
All sorts of materials are available on this webpage for background information and resource materials for student research.	
Journal Article by Justice Thomas R. Berger: The Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry	Link 
Berger, Thomas R.. "The Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry." Osgoode Hall Law Journal 16.3 (1978) : 639-647. http://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/ohlj/vol16/iss3/5	
Berger Report Volume 1: Northern Frontiers, Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry	Link 
Also known as: The Berger Report (1977). This is the full report, volume 1.	
Berger Report Volume 2: Northern Frontiers, Northern Homeland: The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry	Link 
Also known as the Berger Report. This website has the full text of volume 2 of the report.	
Documentary Film: The Berger Inquiry	Link 
The documentary was filmed in the summer of 1976, during the final months of the Berger Inquiry. It features interviews with many key figures in the Inquiry, as well as footage from the community hearings at Rae (Behchok) and Colville Lake. length: 1 hour 27 minutes	

HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:

Language and Culture

Relationship with family, ancestors**Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders**

Were Elders or Knowledge Holders involved in the development of this Lesson Plan? No
Can Elders or Knowledge Holders be invited to help teach part of this lesson plan? Yes

Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders**Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)**

See the reflection questions that are part of the group presentation. Also, see the related lesson plan entitled *Dene Resistance to Colonialism: The Berger Inquiry (Personal Reflection)*.

OTHER DETAILS

RELATED LESSON PLANS

- [Dene Resistance to Colonialism: The Berger Inquiry \(Personal Reflection\)](#)
- [Résistance des Dénés au colonialisme : l'enquête Berger \(réflexion personnelle\)](#)
- [Résistance des Dénés au colonialisme : L'enquête Berger](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

Name	Role/Job Title	Place
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QUESTIONS/MORE DETAILS

For Questions contact: [Dechinta \(admin@dechinta.ca\)](mailto:admin@dechinta.ca) for more information.